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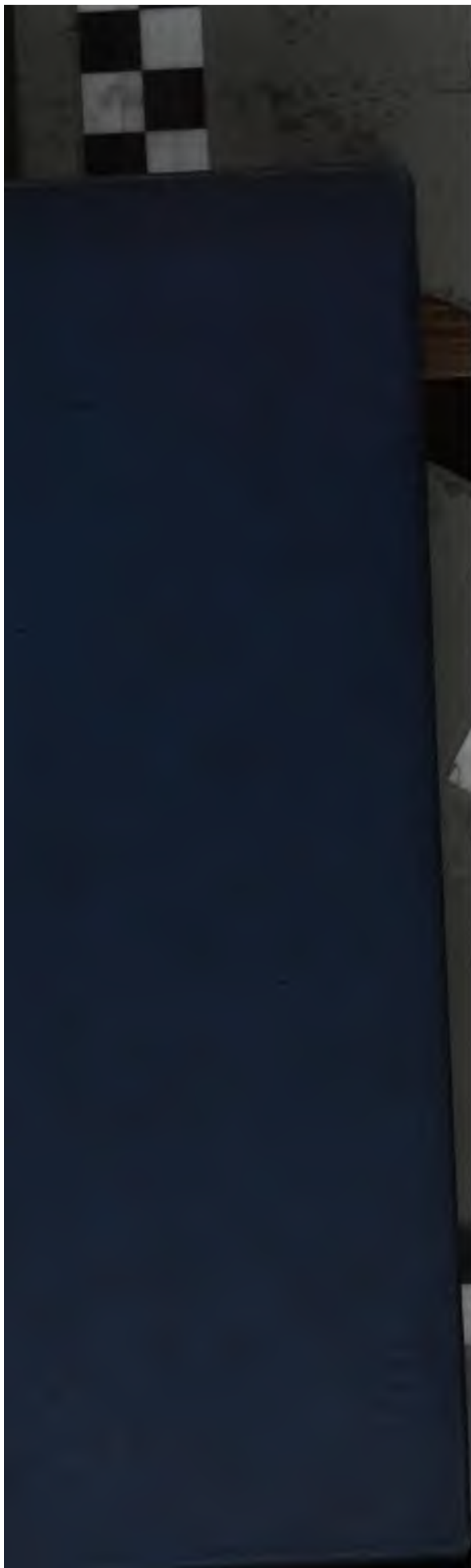
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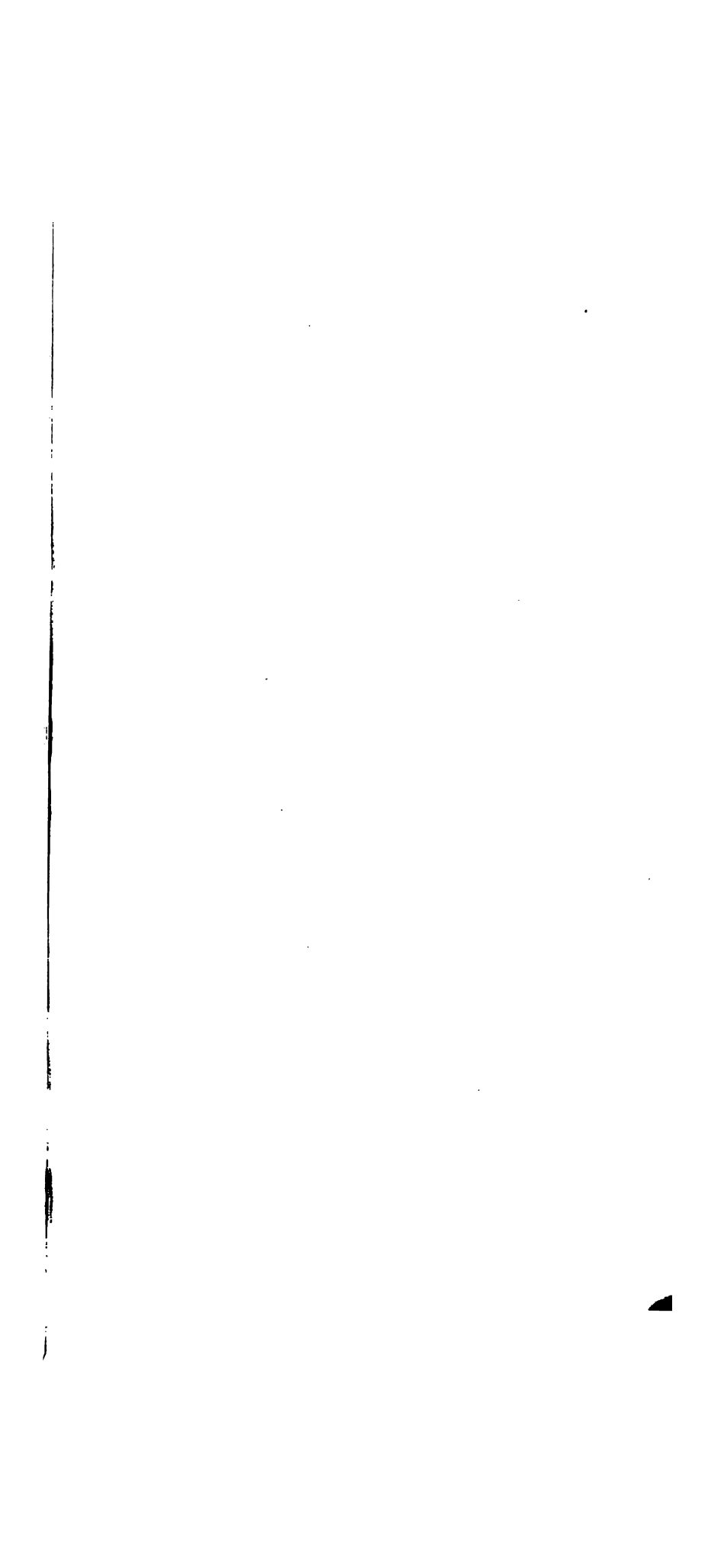


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A S E R M O N.

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217

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A S E R M O N,

PREACHED

IN THE UNITARIAN CHAPEL,  
IN ESSEX-STREET, LONDON;

SUNDAY, JULY XXI. MDCCXCIII.

ON UNDERTAKING THE PASTORAL OFFICE IN  
THAT PLACE.

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BY JOHN DISNEY, D.D. F.S.A.

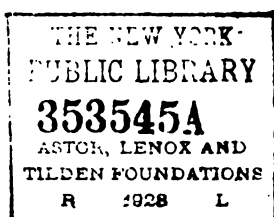
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MDCCXCIII.





A  
S E R M O N.

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II CORINTHIANS IV. 5.

WE PREACH NOT OURSELVES BUT CHRIST  
JESUS THE LORD; AND OURSELVES YOUR  
SERVANTS FOR JESUS'S SAKE.

THE apostle Paul, in this his second epistle addressed to the christians at Corinth, disclaims the practice of using any art or cunning, any concealment or amplification, in order to interpret the word of God unfaithfully or deceitfully; and, in confirmation of the purity of his purpose, he appeals to the 'manifestation of the truth, commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.'

After this public challenge of any impeachment of his conduct as a minister of Jesus Christ, and  
solemn

solemn declaration of his purpose not to abuse, by any private and unwarrantable practices, the doctrine he had engaged to preach, but to refer himself to the approbation of God and every good man, he proceeds to ascribe the difficulties and hindrances with which the religion of Jesus Christ had to contend, to their true cause. The God of this world, as he expresses himself; the pursuits of wealth and pleasure; a devotedness to the enjoyment of ignoble ease and relaxing indulgence; the gratification of their lower passions, and the entire occupation of their minds in the things of the world, had so blinded men's understandings, that they were impenetrable by the light of the gospel of Christ. This excess of attention to animal and secular pursuits, so much below and unbecoming the enlarged and noble views now opened to mankind by the preaching of Christ and his apostles, not only cast an impervious cloud between the reason of man and the christian revelation, but occasioned a darkness almost visible. And so long as the same cause shall continue, the same effect will follow.

Our apostle proclaims his own mission, and the extent of his profession; that he preached  
not

not himself, but our lord Jesus Christ, and that he himself was only the servant of Jesus for the propagation of his gospel. At the same time, he declares that that same God, (the God of Christ, of Paul, and of all mankind,) who had commanded light to shine out of darkness in the natural world, had enlightened him with the knowledge of the 'glory of God' which was on 'the face of Jesus Christ' or in 'the person' of Jesus Christ, as the same expression is rendered in another part of this epistle \*.

Paul most scrupulously states the christian revelation to have derived its authority and pretensions from God, in contradistinction to Christ and his apostles, the instruments employed in its promulgation to the world. He styles Christ 'the image of God,' that is, in his purity and excellence of character; in like manner Moses says, 'in the image of God, made he man.' We might indeed consider this description of Christ as referring to the gospel itself, as the image, or mirror, of the mind and will of God. Agreeably to this representation we also may understand the same apostle, when he says in our context, that 'God shined in their  
' hearts,

\* See chap. ii. 10. and Pyle on 2 Cor. iv. 6.

‘ hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the ‘ glory of God, on the face of Jesus Christ,’—to mean, that that more perfect acquaintance with the will of God which was possessed by him, was communicated for the sole purpose of displaying the better knowledge of God, by means of the dispensation of Jesus Christ. For, what visual light is to the bodily eye, the same is the light of the christian revelation to the understanding mind of man.

Our apostle, as though he apprehended he might be misunderstood, and, from a mistake of his meaning, be supposed to arrogate to himself more extraordinary powers than were given him; or, lest future preachers of the gospel who might have no extraordinary powers at all committed to them, should make any claim to such pretensions, most seasonably observes, with great truth and justness of remark, that this treasure of heavenly knowledge was committed to earthen vessels; in other words, that it was intrusted to men, and was intended to be left to make its way in the world without any further supernatural illumination from the father of lights.

It is apparent that the design of this observation was to lead the immediate followers, and  
future

and future disciples of Christ to consider the gospel as the work of God, and the whole scheme of christianity to be, what we are persuaded it really is, a revelation of his mind and will. It was also a no less seasonable and proper protest against the pretended powers and assumed privileges of the priesthood which had been greatly abused, and were, therefore, likely to be continued so long as the weakness and credulity of mankind should leave them their hopes and fears to work upon.

Paul having thus stated and insisted that the gospel of Christ was from God, and that he had employed human agents to preach and propagate it to the world, proceeds, with all the simplicity of an apostle of this benevolent religion, but with all the dignity of a learned and eloquent scholar, to prove his declaration respecting himself, by a general relation of the difficulties which attended his ministry. His own words will better explain his meaning than any paraphrase we can give of them. ‘ We  
‘ are pressed,’ writes he, ‘ but not straitened ;  
‘ perplexed, but not wholly at a loss ; driven  
‘ away, but not utter’y forsaken ; thrown down,  
‘ but not killed ; bearing about every-where  
‘ the deadly marks of the lord Jesus on our  
B body,

‘ body, that the life also of Jesus may be displayed in the same body. For we, who are alive, are constantly delivered over unto death, that the life of Jesus also may be displayed in this mortal body : so that death sheweth himself in us, but life in you. Now, having that spirit of faith spoken of in scripture, *I believed, and therefore spake*, we also believe, and therefore speak : knowing that he, who raised the lord Jesus to life, will also raise us through Jesus, and present us with you. Now all these sufferings are for your sakes, that the favor of the gospel, abounding in many, may make thanksgivings abound also unto the glory of God. Therefore we faint not ; for though our outward man decay, our inward man is renewed day by day. For this light affliction, which is but for a moment, at length produceth for us, in a measure exceedingly abundant, an eternal weight of glory. For we consider not the things, that are seen, but the things, that are not seen : for the things, that are seen, are only for a time ; but the things, that are not seen, are eternal \*.”

The apostle rested the evidence of the truth of the gospel of Christ upon its being derived from

\* 2 Cor. iv. 8—18. Mr. Wakefield’s translation.

from God, and declared that christianity bore, in its very face or appearance, the image or representation of his will. He then advances in his testimony respecting himself and his own ministry, declaring that he preached not himself, but the gospel of Jesus Christ our lord; and that in his ministerial character he was the servant of his hearers for Jesus's sake, or for the sake of the gospel.

To 'preach Christ' is a very important duty, and belongs not to ministers of religion alone, but to every believer in the truth of the christian revelation. Ministers of the gospel, when they preach Christ, should especially respect the authority by which his gospel was promulgated, the evidences by which it is supported, the doctrines and precepts which it teaches, and the sanction of a future state which it reveals. It is their duty to be faithful to their trust; neither to add to, nor take from the law by which they profess to regulate their faith and practice, and, as far as they are able, with integrity, simplicity, and godly sincerity, to declare the whole counsel of God. But all the members of christian societies are as much obliged by the very nature of their christian profession to regard these things as their mi-



nifters. The great body of christians of every denomination are sufficiently furnished with reason and judgment to decide for themselves, if they would exercise that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free ; and many of them are abundantly provided with all the subsidiary helps of human learning. The philological learning and reasoning powers of some eminently learned christians have been, and may be again, well employed in repelling the sophistry and dogmatism of other learned men ; but the gospel history does not necessarily require more than a plain understanding, and an ingenuous and teachable disposition. The testimony of history will support me in saying, had not the impugnors and corruptors of the christian faith united themselves and their cause with the civil governments of this world, and had not power and wealth been joined together to excite the artful devices of men, and to unite them in confederacy against the simplicity, the peace and charity of the gospel, the common sense of mankind would have prevented the many sad corruptions of the word of truth, or, long before this our day, have corrected and expunged them from the popular creed of the christian world.

As fellow-christians, disciples of the same master, we have one common obligation to pay our religious worship to the one God and father of all, agreeably to the convictions of our own minds. The minister who conducts such religious service, and the people who join with him, stand in precisely the same character before God, the only object of their religious praise, thanksgiving, and adoration. By a common consent they previously concur in the received forms of worship, and their united prayers and praises will, we trust, be offered to the creator and governor of the world, accompanied with dispositions that will recommend them to him, and their prayers will return with increasing good effect upon the hearts of those who devoutly address themselves to him in sincerity and truth.

In that part of the minister's duty which respects the preaching and expounding the word of God, and recommending and enforcing the religious and moral duties of the gospel to his hearers, he has no claim whatever to any other confidence than what will arise from his being supported by the authority of the scriptures, and the soundness of his argument. The purity of his motives, the strength of his own convictions,

convictions, and the pains he may have taken to inform himself, are certainly so many recommendations of his personal character as a christian minister, but they should have no conclusive effect upon others as a christian people. Christian hearers of the word, like the Bereans of old, should search the scriptures, inquire and determine for themselves whether things are as they are represented to be. The liberty which the principles of christianity allow, and which every honest pursuit after truth requires, can be limited only by the personal satisfaction of the candid inquirer, and no measures of expediency should restrain the full and free discussion of religious subjects, beyond what the rules connected with every serious investigation of important truths, and the honest application of the result of such inquiry to every man's situation in life, may demand.

In the full exercise of this liberty, Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, the protestant reformers, and protestant dissidents of every description, have successively vindicated their principles and conduct, and defended the foundation and superstructure of their respective systems ; and the world has, in return, been unhappily disposed to consider them as equi-

dangerous and unjustifiable innovations. This liberty, however, ought to be as extensively enjoyed, as it is universally claimed: for that same measure of it, which is, in any country or under any circumstances, exercised by one body of christians, is equally the right of all.

But, more particularly in all voluntary christian societies which are not previously cramped by any contradictory engagements with the state, the enjoyment of this gospel-liberty by all its members, must be a constituent principle in its formation, and essential to its existence. No apology will excuse the deprivation of it for a moment; nor any pretence of preserving peace justify the interruption of it. The principles of religious liberty are inseparable from the principles of christianity, of general protestantism, and of a protestant dissent from state-protestantism. A christian church ought not to be exclusively connected with any civil government as such, but is entitled equally to the protection of all.

This short and general statement of the extent of the principles of your christian liberty, and of my own, is a sufficient justification of our assembling together in this place to worship the

the one only living and true God. And so long as we entertain these principles of christian liberty, and a conviction that religious adoration and thanksgiving should be paid to Jehovah alone, and to none other, I trust we shall be permitted to meet together for the purpose of religious worship, and religious instruction. Were it possible to imagine the time to come when our minds shall relinquish these leading characters of christianity, and of protestantism, then, but not till then, it will be our duty to follow our new convictions, without any imputation of apostatizing from the religion of the gospel, or the principles of protestantism. In the mean time, we are bound to follow the truth according to our present serious persuasion concerning it, and to judge for ourselves.

The present subject was suggested by the new situation in which, for the first time, I this day stand before you.

When I resigned my ministry, and all my prospects in the church of England, I relinquished, from a principle of duty, a situation most desirable to me in respect of personal accommodations, personal friendships, and far and local attachments ; but, from the tenor

the doctrines of the established church, and more especially from the trinitarian forms of its worship, it was utterly inconsistent with integrity, (under my convictions of the proper unity of God, and that he only is to be worshipped,) to remain a minister, or a member, of a church to whose articles, creed, and liturgy I could not give my assent. This resignation, made under the pressure of difficulties and discouragements almost peculiar to myself, has, however, been the source of the greatest comfort and happiness to my mind, from that hour to the present, and I am persuaded will continue to be so to the end of my life.

Upwards of ten years have now elapsed since I became assistant-minister to this congregation. The support which your countenance and approbation afforded me in the hour of trial, and the affectionate attentions I have experienced since the commencement of our connection, are entitled to this grateful acknowledgment: and I trust, that the same good understanding which has hitherto improved with our acquaintance, will not be impeached by our still better knowledge of, and nearer relationship to, each other.

It

It is, therefore, no small satisfaction to me, that the unexpected resignation of my late worthy colleague, who is very deservedly esteemed by you, has been followed by my being appointed his successor: and I the more readily accepted of this voluntary and unanimous appointment of the trustees of this chapel, because I had an assured persuasion that it would meet with your general concurrence. I should now be unjust to you and to myself were I not to add, that the truth of this persuasion has been confirmed in very satisfactory and unqualified terms. I enter upon my charge, not indeed without much anxiety and solicitude, but with all the satisfaction that an honest mind may be allowed to derive from so honourable a connection: I enter upon it with an ardent desire to promote the better knowledge of the truth and purity of our common christianity, and the practice of all virtue; and, I hope, with that just diffidence also of my own abilities to discharge these important duties with credit to you and to myself, as will awaken the most unremitting attention, and vigorous exertion on my part.

We are generally agreed in believing unity of the one supreme cause of all th

and that he is the only object of religious praise and adoration; that to fear God and keep his commandments, and to love our neighbours as ourselves, comprise the whole duty of man; and that there will be a resurrection of the dead. Let us ‘ add to our faith, virtue, knowledge, ‘ temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly- ‘ kindness, and charity: for, if these things ‘ be in us, and abound, they will make us that ‘ we shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in ‘ the knowledge of our lord Jesus Christ.’\*

Let us jointly endeavour to promote, by every word and deed, christian charity and brotherly love among every description of men. May we, by cultivating these virtues among ourselves, become distinguished examples to others. The harmony of our society arises from our reciprocal good opinion and confidence; and our recent connection is established, I trust, by our previous mutual knowledge of each other. May this great source of our common comfort and edification remain, under the blessing of God, in uninterrupted peace and love. May it equally resist the boldest attacks of our open enemies, and every secret and clandestine

\* 2 Pet. i. 5—8.



clandestine attempt to disturb the dearest consolations of human life.

To conclude. We, my brethren, are as a city placed on an hill, exposed to every passing eye. If, therefore, we attach ourselves to our principles in earnest, and are desirous of approving ourselves to God and man, we must be watchful and vigilant in all the duties of our christian profession. The purity of our religious faith will avail us nothing unless it be accompanied by a truly religious and virtuous character; neither will our zeal for religious liberty be of any real service to us, unless we freely allow the same portion to others, which we claim and exercise ourselves.

Finally. Let me remind you of the occasion which was given to the adversaries of christianity in the earliest ages of the church to exclaim, ‘ How greatly do these christians love one another ! ’ We all know what the scripture say of brotherly love; the first christians recommended it by their example; and it will become us to enforce the practice of it, in this our day, by every word and work.

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 PHILOSOPHERS AND POLITICIANS  
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 FRANCE,  
 ON THE SUBJECT OF  
 RELIGION.

*By* JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.

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1793.



# L E T T E R S

ADDRESSED TO THE

PHILOSOPHERS AND POLITICIANS

OF

F R A N C E.

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## L E T T E R I.


GENTLEMEN,

**T**HE representatives of your nation, zealous to distinguish themselves as the patrons of liberty, and the friends of the oppressed and persecuted, in every part of the world, have done me the honour of making me a citizen of France; and many of your departments, conceiving much too highly of me, and mistaking my talents, did me the farther honour of inviting me to take a seat in your Conventional Assembly. Though,  
B conscious



conscious of my incapacity to discharge the duties of this appointment, and unwilling to abandon a situation of some usefulness in this country, I declined *this* honour, I accepted with gratitude that of *citizenship* for myself, as well as for my son; and, willing to do every thing in my power for the country that has so generously adopted me, I shall run the risk of being less favourably thought of by some of you, by addressing you on a subject which I conceive to be of infinite importance to all mankind, though it appears to be too much overlooked, or grossly misunderstood, by the greatest part of the French nation. You to whom I particularly address these *Letters*, viz. the *Philosophers and Politicians*, will smile, and some of you perhaps will proceed no farther, when I say that this subject is that of *religion*.

I am well aware that the very term *religion* will give many of you disgust. Nor do I wonder at it, when I consider how much the thing has been abused, and how much the interested and artful have availed themselves  
of



of the ignorance and credulity of the rest of the world with respect to it, so that the grossest impositions have long passed for serious truth.

Such, however, you well know to have been the case with respect to philosophy, and especially chemistry, though the age of mystery and deception in this business is now over, and rational and useful science has taken place of solemn pretensions, absurd systems, and idle tricks. But because we now hear no more of the art of *transmuting metals*, or of the *elixir vitæ*, which were the great objects of the chemists of the last age, do we abandon every thing that bears the name of *chemistry*? Neither, then, ought we to discard every thing that bears the name of *religion*, because we have exploded superstition and priestcraft.

The objects of religion are unquestionably of infinite magnitude, compared to which every thing relating to philosophy and chemistry is as nothing. If there be a God, a

providence, and a future state, which are the objects of religion, it must be of the greatest consequence to men to be apprized of them. For besides that they are subjects of the greatest sublimity in themselves, and most deserving of our attention and contemplation as rational beings, our knowledge of them is of the greatest use to direct our practice, and enable us to secure our greatest happiness.

I am far, however, from being willing to dazzle your minds with a display of the magnitude, and interesting nature, of the objects that I would recommend to your attention. Be as much upon your guard against deception as you possibly can. It behoves you to be so, and the more, in proportion to the importance of the subject. But be upon your guard also against deep-rooted prejudices with respect to a subject that you must acknowledge you have not much considered. Take nothing for granted, either from your nurses, from bold atheistical writers, who abound among you, or from myself. But whatever means you apply to detect error, and investigate truth,

in other cases, apply them here ; and admit nothing for true but when the reasons in favour of it shall be superior to those against it.

I will even put the matter on this fair issue. I invite you to admit nothing but what shall appear to be least contrary to *natural analogy*, and consequently to *probability*. For I maintain that, as unbelievers in revealed religion, you admit what is more contrary to common experience, and daily observation, than I do. I well know you laugh at the idea of *miracles* ; but I say that it will be found, upon inquiry, that you believe in greater miracles than myself. This you must acknowledge to be a fair issue, and upon this I freely put every question between us.

I am, &c.

## LETTER II.

*Of the Being of a God.*

GENTLEMEN,

WHEN I say that there is a *God*, I mean that there is an intelligent author of nature, and I maintain that it is most agreeable to natural analogy to admit this. Because marks of *design*, which we universally consider as indications of *mind*, are as conspicuous in the works of *nature*, as in those of *art*,

Would any person, after considering the structure and obvious use of a *telescope*, maintain that it was made without any design, and not intended to give us a distinct view of remote objects, and therefore that it proves the existence of a mind in which that design was formed, previous to the construction of the instrument? Can the same person, then, consider the structure of the *eye*, and not say that

that it was a work of design also, its use being exactly similar to that of the telescope, and at least as well adapted to answer its end? Are not, also, hands, feet, and every other part of the human body, as clearly adapted to answer their several purposes? May not the same observation be made with respect to every part of nature? Is not every thing we see a part of one great whole? Does there not, then, exist a mind capable of comprehending this whole, and a cause that produced the whole? Is it not as absurd to say that the visible universe had no cause without itself, as that a telescope had none?

Whatever difficulty may attend the farther question, *what was the cause of this cause*, thus far we proceed on the clearest grounds, following the most indubitable analogies; and difficult as it may be to conceive that this great cause of all things exists, and has existed, *uncaused* from all eternity, it is not so difficult as to believe that any thing could begin to be without any cause; for this you cannot but acknowledge to be an absolute impossibility.

possibility. For if ever there was a time when nothing had existed, nothing could have existed. The actual existence, therefore, of such a world as this of which we make a part, a world which bears every possible mark of the most exquisite design, is an irrefragable proof that there exists, and has existed from all eternity, a Being possessed of a mind capable of comprehending it, and that must be deemed the proper author of it.

That we do not *see* this great Being, is no evidence of his non-existence. For as many things do not affect some of our senses, which are the inlets of all our ideas, others may elude them all. Nor is it of any moment whatever in what kind of *substance* the attributes of power and intelligence, which we must ascribe to the author of the visible universe, reside. In fact, we know nothing of any *substance*, having no idea of any thing but what we call *properties*, which, as we say, inhere in, or belong to, the several things, or substances, that we are acquainted with. It is enough for us that there are evident marks of  
design

design in what we see, to infer the existence of a *designing cause*, whatever that cause be, and whether, with respect to its substance, it be visible or invisible, tangible or intangible, &c. &c. &c.

I am, &c.

### LETTER III.

#### *Of the Attributes and Providence of God.*

GENTLEMEN,

**A**DMITTING the being of a *God*, or a *principle of intelligence* in the Universe, we must judge of the *designs* of this Being as we would of those of any other, viz. by the character of his works. And the works of nature, I think you cannot but admit with me, are the works of a *benevolent* author; all percipient creatures being formed capable of enjoyments suited to their nature, and furnished with the means of procuring them, and also of avoiding, or mitigating, the evils to which they are necessarily exposed.

The



The more we see into the œconomy of nature, the more sensible we are that all evil is subservient to good, and, as far as we can judge, inseparable from it ; so that, for any thing that appears, the most benevolent Being would not have constituted the universe otherwise than it is. That we should not be able to see the uses of all particular evils, and should not be able to comprehend the whole of so immense a system as that of the universe, cannot appear surprising, when one man is not always able, without particular instruction, to comprehend the works of another man.

It is also most agreeable to analogy to ascribe the whole universe to *one author*, on account of the uniformity that is evident through the whole, and the subserviency of one part to another, immense as this great whole is, and incomprehensible as the great Author of it must be. If it would be unreasonable to suppose that one being formed the head of a man, another the hands, and others the remaining parts of the body, equally unreasonable would

it be to suppose that one being formed the earth, another the plants, another the fowls, and others the land and sea animals belonging to it; since they are all intimately related to, and connected with, each other, and in fact are only parts of *one whole*. If we carry our views farther, we shall see the reasonableness of concluding that the earth and the moon, the sun and the planetary system, nay the systems of suns, and every thing comprised in the whole universe, had but one and the same author; since the same law of gravitation, and probably many other laws, connect them all.

Farther, as no intelligent being does any thing without some view, or design, we must conclude that every thing in nature has its specific and proper uses; that nothing was formed in vain; the most inconsiderable article, as it may appear to us, being as essential to the whole as the larger and more prominent parts. And as the laws of nature must be intimately known to the Author of them, he must foresee every thing that can come to pass, and must have planned every thing that comes

comes to pass from the beginning, so that nothing can ever oppose his design. This is what we call the doctrine of an universal and particular *Providence*, or the adaptation of all things, and of all events, to the designs of that great Being who planned, and who presides over, the whole. This is a truth no less clear and indubitable, than it is sublime, and confounding to our understandings.

I frequently read the writings of your atheistical philosophers, that I may clearly understand, and enter into, your views and feelings. I wish you would do the same with respect to our writings. In your endeavours to exclude the idea of a designing cause from the universe, I perceive much embarrassment and contradiction, when you would substitute the term *Nature* for that of *God*. You are struck with the manifest wonders of nature, and look no farther. I see the same wonders, but they lead me to revere the great Author of nature, that *mind* which comprehends the whole. You see nothing in nature but *effects*. I revere the *cause*. What you  
ascribe

ascribe to a blind undefining principle, something that bears no analogy to what we call *mind*, or *person*, I ascribe to a proper intelligent Being, a Being, whom I consider, and am happy in considering, as ever present with me, and attentive to me, and to all things; who brought me into being for the most benevolent purposes, and who will conduct me through all the stages of it. You see nothing around you but something to gaze at. I look beyond all this, to a Being, or a person, that I can speak to, the object of my gratitude, my attachment, and my confidence.

Acknowledge then, that whatever else you may think of my sentiments, they make me happier than yours can possibly make you; especially when it is added, that, in my ideas, the present life is by no means the whole, nay, but the very infancy of my existence, and that the great Being who made me, and who has placed me in a school of discipline here, will not leave me in the grave, but produce me again, in circumstances much more favourable than the present.

Here,

Here, I am sensible, you will smile again; but attend to what I shall observe on this subject in my next Letters.

I am, &c.

#### LETTER IV.

*Of the Evidence of the Miracles performed in Attestation of the Jewish and Christian Religion.*

GENTLEMEN,

**A**DMITTING the being of a God, and his constant Providence, you ask me what evidence I have of a *future state*. I answer (and I beg you will not revolt at my language, but have the patience to hear me out) the express declaration of God himself, that he will raise men from the dead at a future period, and that he will then render unto them according to their works; and you cannot doubt the power of the Author of nature to do this.

If you ask me the evidence of this, which I know you will think a strange assertion, I  
answer,


answer, that this has been declared by men who were commissioned by God for the purpose, and who proved their mission from him by such works as God only, the Author of nature, could perform, viz. real *miracles*, an evidence of a power that could controul the laws of nature.

Again, the proof that such miracles have been wrought is such *testimony* as cannot be denied without admitting still greater miracles, viz. that numbers of persons, the best qualified to judge of them, and who had no motive to impose upon others, attest their reality. Since, to suppose that all those persons were either deceived themselves, or concurred in a scheme to impose upon others, would be more evidently contrary to the known course of nature respecting mankind (who we must take for granted have been the same in all ages) than the reality of the miracles which they attest; this, when all the circumstances of the case are attentively considered, being a more manifest violation of the established laws of nature, than the other, and for no rational end.

For

For example, that the whole nation of the Jews, consisting at that time of six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, should believe that, after seeing many miracles performed in Egypt, they all walked through the Red Sea, while the waters divided to make them way; that they all heard the distinct articulate pronunciation of the ten commandments from mount Sinai; that after continuing in the wilderness forty years, during which they were witnesses of several other miracles, they all went through the river Jordan as they had through the Red Sea; that they should observe the Passover, and other annual customs, in commemoration of those events, and preserve among them to this day books containing a distinct narrative of these events, universally, and at all times, believed to be written at the time while the events were recent, are facts of this nature.

Jews are *men*, and they were by no means previously disposed to believe any thing of the kind above mentioned, or to practise the religious rites enjoined upon them in consequence  
of



of them. And therefore that their minds should be universally impressed with this belief, without a sufficient cause, in the reality of the events, would be a proper miracle, nay a complication of miracles, of the most extraordinary nature. And what makes the case more extraordinary still, it would be a series of miracles wrought for no end; whereas the miracles recorded in the books of Moses had a great and worthy object, viz. to impress the minds of the Jewish nation, and through them those of other nations, with the firm belief of the supremacy of one true God, the maker of all things, and of his providence in conducting the affairs of men.

Also, the miracles performed by Christ, the great object of whose mission was the revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments, are less extraordinary, and less contrary to the common course of nature, than the firm belief of so many thousands of persons, previously disposed as they all were, that such miracles were wrought; when they had every opportunity, and every

C                      motive,



motive, that men could have to satisfy themselves concerning their truth, on the supposition that no such miracles were wrought. And the reality of their belief cannot be questioned, since they sacrificed every thing that men hold dear to them in life, and many of them life itself, to their belief.

The miracle, for so I must call it, of so many persons deceiving themselves and others, could not have been calculated for any other purpose than that of *mere delusion*, without any rational object whatever. Whereas the miracles on which the belief of Christianity is established had the greatest and most glorious object that can be conceived, viz. the giving mankind a just idea of their future destination, shewing them that this life is but the infancy of their being, and that they are to be educated for an immortal life hereafter. The full persuasion of these great truths gives an unspeakable dignity to the human character; it adds greatly to the true enjoyment of this life, and in a manner annihilates all its pains and troubles, as well as tends to prepare them for their future state.

This

This was an object worthy of the author of the human race, and could not have been accomplished by any other than supernatural means; no appearances in nature giving us any rational ground to expect that we shall survive the grave. Nothing, however, could be better calculated to produce this belief than such miracles as Christ wrought, and himself, the great preacher of the doctrine, dying in order to exemplify in his own person, that resurrection which he was authorised to promise to all. Had the most incredulous of mankind been asked what evidence of a future life would satisfy them, they could not have demanded any thing more than this; nor, as I have distinctly shewn in my *Discourse on the Resurrection of Jesus*, could they have demanded any stronger evidence of any fact, than that which divine Providence has actually provided for *this*; so that its credibility should be stronger, especially in remote ages, and to the end of time.

I am, &c.

## LETTER IV.

*Cautions against superficial Reasoning on this Subject.*

GENTLEMEN,

**I**T is not my intention in these *Letters* to enter into a detail of the evidences of revealed religion. This I have done, in a great measure, in other publications; but only to give you what I apprehend many of you have not at present, viz. some idea of the importance of the subject, and the nature of the evidence, in order to induce you to make farther inquiries concerning it; and I wish you to do this with the diligence and rigour that the case requires.

Be persuaded, then, to examine with due care and impartiality the evidence of the facts on which revealed religion is founded, as you would do with respect to any other interesting facts of the same historical nature. It is  
acknow-

acknowledged that the facts recorded in the books of scripture are not analogous to any that now fall under our observation, and that, therefore, they require a proportionably stronger evidence. But then you will find the evidence to *be* proportionably stronger than that for ordinary facts ; no other facts recorded in history being nearly so well attested. Circumstanced as the primitive Christians were, we cannot doubt but that both they, and their enemies, felt themselves deeply interested in ascertaining the truth with respect to them. In consequence of this situation, we may be well assured that no other facts whatever underwent a thousandth part of the scrutiny that, from the nature of the case, these *must* have done ; and while they were *recent*, so that the examination was the most easy. Both the *persecuted* and the *persecutors* would do every thing that their opposite interests could suggest to prove, or to disprove, the miracles appealed to. And we see that after a contest of three centuries, when Christianity had all the powers of the world, and all the learning of it too, to con-

tend with, it prevailed, and established itself. What could this be owing to but the power of truth? for it had no other advantage whatever.

Do not content yourselves with saying that  
“ mankind have always been the dupes of  
“ imposition, so that there is no occasion to  
“ trouble yourselves with inquiring by what  
“ means they were imposed upon in this, or  
“ any other particular case.”

Credulity is an affection of the human mind that well deserves to be considered by philosophers. Like other *effects*, this must have a fixed *cause*. And the only reason why men become disposed to believe without much inquiry, is an idea, acquired by themselves, or received from others for whose opinion they have a respect, that strict inquiry was not necessary; the thing to which their assent is demanded being so analogous to other undoubted events, that a slight evidence is sufficient. This, however, supposes that the credibility of some events to which these are  
analogous

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analogous was originally well established. Consequently, the too easy belief of extraordinary events affords a pretty strong presumption, that, though not the events in question, yet that others similar to them, were well authenticated.

If we see any person, by his knowledge of philosophy, chemistry, sleight of hand, or any other means, do things that astonish us, we give the closest attention to the facts, and do not admit them at first without very particular evidence. But having seen them, or been by any other means fully satisfied of their reality, we do not think it necessary to make the same strict examination of similar facts, reported to be performed by the same person, by those in connexion with him, or by similar means. They are then considered as common events, being agreeable to a new analogy of things.

The readiness, therefore, with which the reports of miracles said to be wrought by your saints in the dark ages, in which there is rea-

son to suspect gross mistake, or imposition, will afford a philosopher an argument for believing that, in some preceding age, real miracles had been wrought, and that the credit of them had been well established. For such would be the necessary effect of the reality of the miracles of Christ and of the apostles. These being admitted, the credulity of the Christian world with respect to subsequent miracles followed of course, but not upon any other supposition.

In a similar manner I account for your incredulity with respect to all miracles. You have given no attention to the evidence of the original and well authenticated miracles, but only to that of the subsequent and fabulous ones; and seeing reason to disbelieve *these*, you have been led by a false analogy to suspect *all*. But without considering the present state of things, you should place yourselves in the situation of a philosopher at the time of the promulgation of Christianity; and examine the circumstances of the original miracles, the credit of which procured the too  
easy

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easy belief of the fabulous legends, at which you so justly revolt.

Many unbelievers, viewing things very superficially, think to satisfy themselves and others with saying, that *ancient traditions* are never to be depended upon ; that there were Egyptian and Grecian fables, as well as Jewish and Christian ones, but that now men of sense pay no regard to any of them.

But they do not attend to the obvious and important distinction between *tradition* and *history*, between opinions taken up a long time after a supposed event, and written records of transactions coeval with them ; and this is precisely the difference between the fabulous histories of Egypt and Greece, and the Mosaic and Christian histories. For it is as certain that the books of Moses were written and published to the whole of the Hebrew nation in his life-time, and the history of the evangelists and the Acts of the Apostles in the age in which the transactions were recent, as that the histories of Thucydides and Tacitus



Tacitus were written and published in the same circumstances; because the people among whom they were published equally received them as genuine, and thereby gave their testimony to the general truth of their contents. And at no period of time would it have been more easy to procure them the reception they obtained in the one case, than in the other.

As human nature was the same at all times that it is at present, we may form a judgment of the difficulty of imposing upon any nation, or people, such histories as those of the scriptures by a supposition respecting ourselves. Let any person then endeavour to persuade the people of this country, that their ancestors, in some remote period, passed from Calais to Dover, by walking through the sea, which divided to make them way, and let him produce *books* containing a circumstantial account of the event, as written at the time. Would he be able to procure any credit to the narrative? He would certainly be laughed at for his pains. In fact, it would be no less difficult

difficult for him to do this, than to divide the sea, as he had related. He would find the one to be as really impossible, as much contrary to the established course of nature, as the other.

In like manner, let any person produce books similar to those of the New Testament, and see if he can gain such general credit to them, as to induce thousands of all descriptions of men to undergo the greatest hardships, and even lay down their lives, for their faith in them, even in circumstances far more favourable to his purpose than those in which the evangelists wrote; he would find it as easy to raise the dead, as to effect any such thing.

It requires only a due attention to *facts*, such as no person who has any faith in history can deny, and to the well known principles of *human nature*, to perceive this. But few unbelievers in revelation have been disposed to pay this due attention to either; and in consequence of this they really believe things more extraordinary in their nature, and therefore

therefore more truly *incredible*, than the Jew or the Christian.

Study, then, with particular attention the history of the times in which Christianity was promulgated. The narrative is as circumstantial, and as open to inquiry, as that of Cæsar and Pompey, or that of any other period of antiquity; and you will find indubitable facts, and innumerable of them, absolutely inconsistent with your hasty and random hypothesis.

You will find men of all descriptions, and of all nations, many of them as cool and sensible as yourselves, and who had as much at stake, with respect to character, or fortune, as you can have; men who had every means of informing themselves on the subject, and who evidently spared no pains in doing so; so impressed with the persuasion of the reality of the great events on which the truth of Christianity is founded, that they persisted through life in giving the fullest evidence of their conviction.

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And it is particularly to be observed, that this was not a persuasion concerning *metaphysical opinions*, of which few persons are competent judges, but things that were the objects of the senses; such as the instant cure of disorders well known to be the most incurable, raising the dead to life, and other works equally miraculous and stupendous, in which there could be no suspicion of fallacy, and of which all persons are equally judges.

But some of your writers have given so little attention to this subject, though it is merely an historical one, that they have denied the very existence of Jesus Christ, have asserted that the very term *Christ* was borrowed from some Eastern language, having the same origin with *Christnou*, one of the gods of Hindostan, and that Christianity is only a particular modification of the worship of the sun.

Serious as the subject is, it is not possible to forbear smiling at such palpable ignorance. I shall expect that the same writers will soon attempt to allegorize the history of Julius

Cæſar, and maintain that no ſuch perſon ever exiſted. For there is not a hundredth part of the evidence for the exiſtence of Julius Cæſar, that there is for that of Jeſus Chriſt. Hereafter the hiſtory of France itſelf may be allegorized, the very names of *Lewis*, *Demourier*, and *Pethion*, may be derived from ancient languages, and the preſent war of your republic againſt the deſpots of Europe, may be ſaid to mean nothing more than the war of the elements of nature.

If I had not ſeen ſo much of the power of prejudice, I ſhould wonder that ſo many men, of unqueſtionable good ſenſe among you, and even able writers, ſhould have given ſo little attention as they have done to *natural probability*, in judging concerning an hiſtorical ſubject.

The letter of Pliny the younger is well known to all the learned, and its genuinenefs was never called in queſtion; and yet one would think that ſome of your writers againſt Chriſtianity had never heard of it. He wrote  
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about A. D. 106, between seventy and eighty years after the death of Christ. In it he asks advice of the emperor Trajan how to act with respect to the Christians who were brought before him; and, speaking of the progress that the new religion had made in his province, Bythinia, he says, “ Many of  
“ every rank, and of both sexes, are accused,  
“ and will be accused; nor has the contagion  
“ of this superstition seized cities only, but  
“ lesser towns also, and the open country.  
“ Nevertheless, it seems to me that it may  
“ be restrained, and corrected. It is certain  
“ that the temples, which were almost forsaken,  
“ begin to be more frequented, and  
“ the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission,  
“ are revived. Victims are every  
“ where bought up, where for some time  
“ there were few purchasers.”

Could Christianity have made this amazing progress in so short a time, without force, and against every possible mode of opposition, if there had been no such person as Jesus Christ, or if there had been no truth in  
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the evangelical history. Bythinia was not very far from Judea, where it originated; and as both countries were within the same empire, there could not have been wanting any opportunity of making inquiry into the truth of the facts. And it is remarkable, that the nearer we approach Jerusalem, as at Antioch in Syria, where the imposture, if there had been any, must have been more evident, the more Christians we find. That this should have been the case without there being ~~such~~ such a person as Jesus Christ, or any truth even in the miraculous part of his history, would be more extraordinary than any thing that is related by the evangelists; the admission of which makes all the rest perfectly easy and natural.

Mr. Lequinio, a later writer than Mr. Volney, does not deny the existence of Jesus Christ, but what he says of him is more improbable than even *this*. He represents him as the wisest and best man that ever lived, which he certainly was; “one who was actuated by the most sincere good will to all  
“ the

“ the human race, teaching the great principles of moral equality, and the purest patriotism; braving all dangers; opposing the great, despising alike glory and fortune, equally temperate with respect to himself, beneficent to others, and sympathizing with all; hated by the powerful, whom he provoked, persecuted by the intriguing, whose artifices he exposed, and put to death by a blind and deceived multitude, for whom he had always lived. This generous philanthropist,” he says, “ who wholly sacrificed himself to the public good, who gave his whole existence to the unhappy, and even to his persecutors, never lied but to teach virtue.”—*Prejugés détruits*, p. 286.

Was ever a character in romance more unlike any thing in nature than this? And yet this was an ordinary Jewish carpenter, who had no advantage of education or knowledge of the world. This man, Mr. Lequinio supposes, without any thing supernatural about him, to have acquired this most extraordinary

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ordinary super-human disposition, a generosity and magnanimity exceeding that of all the heroes and philosophers of antiquity, to have converted thousands of his countrymen to the belief not only of his being a prophet, or a man inspired of God, but even *the Messiah*, whom before this they had universally expected would be a king and a conqueror, and that, after dying in the most public manner, he rose from the dead, as he declared beforehand he should do, in confirmation of his divine mission.

If a person of so excellent a moral character could be a mere impostor; if a man with so few natural advantages could deceive so many of his countrymen, all previously disposed to reject his claim, and enable them to deceive so many more, of all nations, we must say that nature, neither before nor since that time, ever produced such men, either to deceive or to be deceived. It is not however a little extraordinary, that Mr. Lequinio should express this high admiration of a man who directed his whole life, and finally died, to establish

establish that very *prejudice* which he himself is labouring to destroy. He certainly did not judge of the feelings of Jesus Christ by his own.

Some of you may be disposed to arraign the conduct of Providence in not superseding the use of miracles, by such a general plan of things as should render them unnecessary for the moral instruction and improvement of man. But, besides that it might be sufficient in reply to this to say, that it is not our business to dictate to the Author of nature, we may easily perceive that if an attention, on the part of man, to the Author of nature be of any use to us, as it evidently is, this end is much better gained by occasional deviations from the laws of nature than by a rigorous adherence to them.

Such is the constitution of human nature, (which we must take for granted is the best,) that things of constant occurrence, and perfectly regular in their appearance, do not easily excite particular attention. Who of

the bulk of mankind asks the reason why the sun rises, why plants produce their proper seeds, or seeds their respective plants? But unusual appearances excite universal attention, and we cannot be satisfied without knowing why they happen. It is very possible for a nation of men to pass their whole lives in the view of all the wonders of nature, without ever inquiring after the Author of nature. But let their attention be excited by prodigies or miracles, and they will be led to reflect upon the subject, and thus come to revere God in all his works, those of common providence, as well as those of an extraordinary nature; and thus a respect for Him and his laws may possess their minds, and influence their conduct. And no person is authorized to say that this great end can be equally answered without miracles, or occasional deviations from the regular laws of nature.

Let me advise you, in a more especial manner, to read with the greatest attention the historical books of scripture, and see whether they

they bear any marks of forgery. If your minds be truly unprejudiced, you will be satisfied that no books were ever written with so much ingenuouſness, or that have so many internal marks of truth. But do not expect that, with regard to composition, and accuracy in other things, they should be without faults. Consider the manners, opinions, and prejudices of the times in which they were written, and make due allowance for them. A tincture of these is an argument of their genuineness. For all that is pretended by well informed Christians is, that the books that are usually termed *sacred*, were written by pious and honest men, well acquainted with the facts which they relate, but that they reason about them in such a manner as it was natural that persons in their circumstances would do. Different writers also, like all other genuine original historians, relate facts with the same variations, with respect to order, and less important circumstances, when they agree in every thing of real consequence.

Consider also that no writer is properly re-

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sponsible

sponsible but for what he relates as of his own knowledge, or the events, and transactions, of his own times. The history of Moses, for example, properly commences with the Exodus. The whole of the book of Genesis must have been collected from tradition, and his account of the creation was such as appeared to him, and other persons of his age, to be well founded. He no where says that he was divinely inspired in what he wrote on that subject.

That the books of scripture were written by particular divine inspiration, is a thing to which the writers themselves made no pretensions. It is a notion destitute of all proof, and that has done great injury to the evidence of Christianity; as also have other absurd opinions, and various superstitious practices, adopted by Christians of later ages, though from the influence of the circumstances in which they were.

In my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* you will find an account of all, or the principal,

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principal, of those opinions and practices, and of the causes which gave rise to them. I beg your attentive perusal of that work, as well as of my *History of the Christian Church to the Fall of the Western Empire*. You will there, I flatter myself, see a natural account of the rise and progress, as I hope you will also see the termination, of those monstrous corruptions of Christianity which justly shock you so much, and which have indisposed so many persons of good sense to all inquiry into the subject.

I mean particularly such doctrines as those of the trinity, transubstantiation, vicarious suffering, and eternal torments; and, above all, the usurpation of all power temporal and spiritual by the Popes, and other ecclesiastical persons, with the horrid cruelties committed by some Christians upon others on account of religion; and that most unnatural union of civil and ecclesiastical authority in all the civil establishments of Christianity in this country, as well as lately with you, from which circumstance alone religion has been enabled to do so much mischief in the world.

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These,

These, and many other absurd doctrines and practices, I disclaim as much as you can do. They are far from being countenanced in the scriptures, though, from gross mistake, and from motives of interest and ambition, they have been represented as essential parts of it. You have been taught from your earliest years to consider them in this light ; and hence, when you come to reflect, your rejection of the whole system, as manifestly absurd, but without taking pains to examine whether the things at which you revolted were really parts of Christianity, or not. You may also have been insensibly influenced in your rejection of Christianity by a prejudice, natural to men of sense, against whatever is commonly received by the vulgar.

A real philosopher, however, will endeavour to divest his mind of *this*, as well as of every other *prejudice*, and to see things as they really *are*. And I flatter myself, that when your infidelity, which has been produced by the civil establishment of a corrupted Christianity, shall have contributed to the  
overthrow

overthrow of that system, that which is genuine will meet with a candid hearing, and a cordial reception among you. True religion, not enjoined, or salaried, by the state, but the choice of the individual, you will find a valuable support of public virtue and public spirit; and a great security to your liberty. On this account, among others, I shall rejoice if, by any means, you can be induced to give to this important subject the attention which it deserves, and I shall then have double pleasure in subscribing myself

Your fellow citizen,

J. PRIESTLEY.

LETTER



## LETTER V.

GENTLEMEN,

**I**N the preceding *Letters* I have addressed you as *philosophers* and as *men*, interested in the discovery of important truth, and acquainted with the methods of investigating it. If I were to address you as *politicians* on the subject of *religion*, it would be in the language of the French merchants to your famous Colbert when he asked them what the government could do in favour of trade, *laissez nous faire, let us alone*. It is a business with which, as statesmen, you have nothing at all to do, and in which you can never interfere with any advantage either to *religion*, or to the *state*.

Naturally, there can be no more connexion between *religion*, and *civil government*, than between *philosophy*, *medicine*, or any other branch of knowledge and civil government ;  
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the objects of both being essentially different. The proper object of civil government is the security of men's persons and property, which requires the union of force; but it has no respect to any thing beyond the present life. Whereas religion consists of peculiar doctrines and practices, which relate to men, personally and not collectively, considered, with respect to which no union of force can be of any advantage to them; and the great object of it is the happiness of men, not as members of society, but as individuals, and in a future state, to which the power of civil governors does not extend.

With much more reason might the state interfere in directing what *medicines* should be administered to the members of the state, and who should administer them; because it might be said, that the strength of the state depends upon the health and vigour of the citizens. But whatever be men's opinions concerning a future state; and the means of preparing for it, or whether they have any belief in a future state or not, care may be taken by good laws,  
and

and a wise administration of them, to prevent their injuring one another in this life.

As far as religion comes in aid of good morals, it can only be by giving men an idea of its being their duty, from a regard to God, and a future state, to behave well and to befriend their neighbours. But this depends upon the sincerity of their belief in religion, which no power of the state can enforce. Temporal punishments, or worldly emoluments, which are all that civil government can hold out to men, cannot make them *believers*. It can only make them *hypocrites*. And therefore there are more conscientious men among sectaries, who are not favoured, but frowned upon by the state, than among the members of establishments. Are not the Protestants among you at least as good members of society as the Catholics, many of them only nominally so; though the former, besides bearing the whole expence of their own religion, contribute their share to that of the state? It is time that they be relieved, if not indemnified, for this extraordinary expence,

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The same may be said of the Dissenters in England.

To suppose that Christianity cannot support itself without the aid of civil government, is the greatest reflection upon it, and contradicted by the clearest facts in history. Not only did this religion establish itself in the world without the aid of civil power, but during three centuries, while all the civil powers in the world were hostile to it. And after Christianity had considerable countenance from the Roman emperors, the salaries of Christian ministers arose from the voluntary contributions of the laity, and there was no such thing as *tythe*, or any thing in the form of a *tax*, for its support, for more than a thousand years after the Christian æra.

Nay the wealth of the church, without the aid of the state, grew exorbitant, and often required to be checked. This more than sufficient provision for the clergy, from the superstition of ignorant ages, occasioned such a redundance in that order of men, that all  
Christian

Christian countries soon groaned under the burden; and an independent subsistence, secured to them by private donations, and the laws of the state, took from them all restraint upon their conduct; so that in many countries they became vicious and abandoned in the extreme, a great cause of the corruption, not of the reformation, of morals.

In this state of things, religion being a mere trade, its doctrines, from causes that I have elsewhere explained, exceedingly absurd, and the practices enjoined by it a miserable superstition, men of good sense and little inquiry, and especially those who were disposed to be licentious, easily became unbelievers. This has been remarkably the case with you, and begins to be so with us. But as all evils, in the course of divine providence, tend to cure themselves, this infidelity, which has been produced by civil establishments of religion, will I hope be the means of overturning them; and then rational Christianity, without any aid from the state, will recommend itself to all thinking and serious men, and the world will be *rechristianized*.

I shall

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I shall not trouble you, or myself, with the recital of all the evils that have arisen from civil establishments of Christianity. Almost the whole of the long catalogue of complaints of philosophers, and politicians, against religion have had no other source than this. All religious *persecution*, and the hatred of one sect to another, has been owing to exclusive privileges granted to some sects. In North America, where there is no civil establishment of any form of Christianity, the members of all Christian societies, however discordant, live upon the best terms with one another, and the state is at no expence on account of any of them.

With us the case is widely different, and the consequences are sufficiently apparent. We, who are Dissenters from the establishment, all lie under civil disadvantages, and many of us are not even tolerated by law. In these circumstances every attempt to obtain any relief from our burdens, nay all our endeavours, by means of the press, to enlighten the minds of our countrymen on the  
subject

subject of religion, and especially on the evil of establishments, excites the greatest hatred and animosity against us. This is perfectly natural with men interested in the continuance of the abuses by which they subsist.

What a glorious example would you set the Christian world, if you could relieve civil government of all concern about religion, and leave men to provide for it as they should think proper themselves. No person who has a real value for his religion could complain of this. On the contrary, he would think his religion disgraced by any support from the state. If the zeal of its friends will not provide for its support, it ought to fall. The Protestants among you have not suffered their religion to fail for want of sufficient funds; and do the Catholics think less highly of their religion, or have they less zeal for it than the Protestants have shewn for theirs? I believe not.

I do not mean, in these *Letters*, to do any thing more than to suggest a few hints to  
lead



lead your thoughts to the subject of *religion*, and its relation to the state, so as to make it appear as worthy as I conceive it to be of your most serious attention. In several of my publications I have considered it much more at large. If you wish to know which of them I would more particularly recommend to your notice, I would take the liberty to mention my *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, and the *Discourse on the Resurrection of Jesus*, besides the *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, the *History of the Christian Church to the Fall of the Western Empire*, and the *History of early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ*, noticed before. These relate to the subject of religion in general, and the evidence of it. The subject of *civil establishments of Christianity*, I have considered in my *Essay on the first Principles of Civil Government*, in my *Letters to Mr. Burke*, and my *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*.

With my earnest wishes for your prosperity, and especially for the speedy and happy  
E settlement



settlement of your civil constitution; trusting that it will be favourable to your best interests, by leading to *virtue* and *happiness* (with respect to which I cannot help considering *religion* as of the most eminent use) and with sincere gratitude for the honour you have conferred upon me; while in my native country, which I have faithfully endeavoured to serve, I have found neither protection nor redress, I am

Your fellow citizen,

Clapton, Jan. 21, 1793.  
Of the French Republic 2.

J. PRIESTLEY.

THE END.



A  
S E R M O N  
ON THE SUBJECT OF  
THE SLAVE TRADE;  
DELIVERED TO A SOCIETY OF  
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,  
AT THE  
NEW MEETING, IN BIRMINGHAM;  
AND PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

— And hath made of one blood all nations of men  
to dwell on all the face of the earth.

ACTS xvii. 26.

B I R M I N G H A M,  
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MDCCLXXXVIII.

{PRICE ONE SHILLING.}

1 Slave Trade

24

THE SLAVE TRADE

IN THE

WEST INDIES

AND

THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

BY

JOHN H. COLEMAN

OF THE

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

NEW YORK

1894



T H E  
P R E F A C E.

**I** Publish this discourse not only in compliance with the request of a society of christians whom I think myself happy in every opportunity of obliging, but also because I thought that some of the arguments on which I have insisted had not been sufficiently urged by other writers on the same subject, and at the same time to evince my readiness to join with christians of all denominations in what appears to me to be right and just.

With the greatest satisfaction should I always go *with the multitude*, if a regard to the sacred rights of *truth* did not, on some occasions, forbid it. Happy it is, however, that there are some cases in which almost all who are truly conscientious, and who

feel the influence of humane and christian sentiments, will concur. May this beget a persuasion, that we *may* be equally conscientious, and moved by a regard to what we deem to be the genuine interests of christianity, in those things on which we differ; and that though different interests and connexions may, unknown to ourselves, give us different sentiments, views, and pursuits; the time will come when this undue influence will cease, and we shall be able calmly to trace the true source and effects of it. And as this is only the infancy of our being, it may be presumed, that what we observe and experience here, may be an useful lesson to us in our future progress.

With respect to the melancholy scene that is now before us, we must content ourselves with saying, that the ways of God are *a great deep*, and *his footsteps in the mighty waters*, not to be traced by us, at least at present. But we are sufficiently authorized to add, that *though clouds and darkness are*



P R E F A C E.



*round about him, righteousness and judgment are ever the habitation of his throne.* Unless this maxim be deeply impressed upon our minds, and made familiar to us by frequent meditation, we must, if we reflect at all, be staggered with a view of the vices, as well as the miseries, which it seems wise and right in Divine Providence to permit on this wide theatre of the world.

As we cannot say what evils are useful in the general plan, or to what height they may safely and usefully rise (this being far above our comprehension) it cannot be our duty to imitate the Divine Being in this part of his conduct. But as we are satisfied that all evil is ultimately subservient to good, and that it is the intention of Providence finally to exterminate all evil; in this most delightful employment we may, and ought, as his own children, to act like God; exerting ourselves, by every means in our power, to remove the prejudices, correct the errors, cure the vices, and relieve the distresses, of our fellow creatures. In ex-

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ertions

ertions of this kind, our motives are pure, pious, and benevolent. We feel as we are are conscious we ought to do; and with whatever *success* it may please God to crown our endeavours, we shall enjoy the satisfaction of *having endeavoured*, and our *labour will not wholly be in vain*.

In this view it must give every good man an unspeakable pleasure to see the general interest that is now taken in behalf of the Negro slaves. It makes us think better of our countrymen, and of mankind. Ill as some think of the world, and of the human race, there are in it many noble characters; and if it was the object of the great scheme of Providence, as no doubt it was, to form such characters, the end of all we see, and sometimes complain of, has been completely answered; and if scenes of difficulty and distress have, in any measure, contributed to form such characters, as undoubtedly they have, we must conclude that, shocking as they appear to us, they have not been introduced into the system in vain.

Looking

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Looking at the *tree*, we may think it ill-shaped, and disgusting; but considering the *fruit*, we must approve and admire it.

I also consider the exertions that are now making with us, and which are likely to be adopted in other christian countries, as an honour to *christianity*. For no such generous sentiments were ever found, and no such exertions were ever made, by heathens. We have juster ideas of the dignity of human nature, and of the common rights of *humanity*, than heathens ever had. At the same time that we justly think that every man is a great and exalted being (*i. e.* capable of becoming such) we consider all distinctions among men as temporary, calculated for the ultimate benefit of all; and consequently that it is for the interest of the lowest orders, as well as of the highest, that such a subordination should subsist. But with this persuasion all christian masters will respect and love their servants and dependants, and will think it their duty to make their situation as easy and happy as possible;

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considering



considering them as *brothers*, and *equals*, in one, and that the most important sense, while they treat them as *inferiors* in another ; and as those who will even rank above them in another state, if they acquit themselves better in this.

These are just, noble, and elevating sentiments, peculiar to believers in revealed religion ; and they are common to *all* believers. We find them among papists, as well as protestants, and among those who are favoured by civil establishments of christianity, as well as those that are frowned upon by them. And these sentiments will always be found among all christians in proportion to the *attention* they give to the great truths of our common religion ; by which I mean the doctrines of a God, of a Providence, and of a future state. These great truths have the advantage of being level to the meanest capacity. A child may understand them. And, at the same time all that the wisest among us can attain to farther, adds but

little to their practical influence. Let these considerations teach the different sects of christians mutual candour, as reflections on the difference of ranks among men should teach us humility and moderation.

Were we truly sensible of the inestimable value of truly christian principles, and felt the influence of them, all christians would respect one another *as such*; and, compared with this great article of agreement, make less account of those in which they differ. When I was at Paris, a priest of the Catholic communion, distinguished for his piety and benevolence, as well as a taste for science, embraced me with tears when he found that I uniformly avowed myself to be a christian; saying I was the only person he had met with, pretending to philosophy, who did so. I told him that I was indeed a christian, but such as he would call a great *beretic*. He replied, “No matter, you “are a christian.” Such magnanimity as this, I have no opportunity of showing, and might not be capable of. For no man  
can

can answer for his own feelings and conduct in new situations. There is a degree of abhorrence and contempt, with which the members of great and old establishments, like that of the church of Rome, are apt to regard *sectaries*, which the sectaries do not feel for them. The reason is, that the members of an establishment know much less of sectaries than sectaries do of them. Thus the Heathens had a much worse opinion of christians, while they were sectaries, than the christians had of them. They were considered in so despicable a light by many, that it was not thought worth while to make any inquiry into the truth of the scandalous reports concerning them. The shocking picture that is given of *Turlupins*, *Beghards*, and other denominations of the reformed, before the time of Luther, may be seen in any ecclesiastical history.

How my excellent Parisian friend would have felt if he had known the full extent of my present heresy I cannot tell. Others, however, of his communion are well apprized

prized of it, without thinking the worse of me, in a moral respect, on that account. Of such men as these christianity may justly make her boast. In all, however, we must make allowance for human frailties, from which no men, not even the apostles, were exempt.


With respect to the *facts* mentioned in this discourse, I can only say that I was far from wishing to exaggerate any thing ; but have taken them from such accounts as appeared to me to be the most to be depended upon ; and as the tracts from which I collected them are in very common circulation, I have no occasion to quote any of them. Under humane masters, slaves may, no doubt, enjoy a certain degree of happiness ; but still they are slaves, subject to the wills, and consequently the caprices, of others ; and there is no proper security from the greatest outrages, but in the protection of *law*.

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I am happy to hear since this Discourse was sent to the press, that one planter, who employs a very great number of slaves, has  
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had no occasion to purchase any fresh ones these twenty years. This may convince us that a stoppage of the importation would not be a great hardship upon the planters in general. It would only compel them to find their own interest in treating their slaves well, and in favouring their propagation.

On the other hand, I must add that I have been informed by a person who resided in Jamaica, that it is usual for the slaves, after they are purchased, to shudder at the sight of a fire, or kitchen utensils, imagining that they are to be killed and eaten, till older slaves convince them that nothing of that kind is intended. What the poor creatures must suffer with this idea on their minds all the voyage, and the terror it must impress on the country in general, in which thousands who are never taken know they are liable to it, is not to be estimated, and for which no good treatment of slaves can compensate. This is what a *brute* cannot be made to suffer, and shews how improper and unnatural this trafficking with the *human species* must be.



which of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that shewed mercy unto him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go thou and do likewise.

LUKE x. 36, 37.

*My christian brethren,*

DO not know whether it be more in the character of men, or in that of christians, that I shall now take the liberty to address you. But if you feel as becomes either, I cannot but sympathize with the miserable and oppressed of the human race; how soon soever they be from yourselves in any other respect. You will consider all mankind as *brethren*; and *neighbours*, intitled to every good office that it may be in our power to render them. As men, and christians, observant of the instructions of our great master in my text, we should regard ourselves not only for our relations, but particular friends; not only for our  
B countrymen;

countrymen; not only for Europeans, but for the distressed inhabitants of Asia, Africa, or America; and not only for christians, but for Jews, Mahometans, and Infidels. And as we ought to feel for our fellow men, we ought, to the utmost extent of our influence, to exert ourselves to relieve their distresses.

Does not, then, the case of the African Negroes, who have long been unjustly enslaved, and have been made to suffer numberless miseries, the least of which is mere servitude, in our West Indies, deserve our compassion, and loudly call for our friendly interposition in their favour? And surely they are not the less intitled to it because their oppressors are our countrymen, and because we have derived, or have imagined that we have derived, benefit from their oppression. Now, then, that it has pleased God, who, for reasons just and wise, no doubt (because such is his character) but often unsearchable by us, permits the rise and progress of all the evils that we see and lament, has awakened the attention of many  
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in our nation to this great and growing enormity, and to interest great numbers in favour of the unhappy sufferers; let not us be the last, though we cannot have the honour of being the first, to join heartily in the measures that are now taking for their relief; it being proposed to recommend their case to the consideration of parliament the present session, and the friends of the measure thinking that a general application from all parts of the country, and especially from towns of note like this, will tend to promote it, and almost ensure its success.

Thoroughly to interest you, and to engage your warmest zeal in the cause, nothing, my brethren, I am confident, will be requisite, besides stating the simple *facts*; of the magnitude of which few persons, not personally concerned in this traffic of the human species, and the treatment to which slaves are subject, are sufficiently apprized. Indeed, had the shocking scenes to which the attention of the public is now invited been generally known before, the evil could not have grown to its present



height, or have existed so long as it has done. The feelings of every man would have revolted at it, and the sense of the nation (expressed, as it would have been, by petitions, and remonstrances) would have operated upon the legislature long before this time. Better, however, it is to make what amends we can for our past inattention, by now opening our eyes to this great evil, than suffer it to grow to a still greater magnitude; which, in the nature of things, will always be attended with a greater difficulty of redress.

Could the present state of things have been so much as imagined at the commencement of this traffic, it might have been prevented with the greatest ease, as no body would have been interested in the continuation of it; whereas at present many will think themselves injured by the just and righteous measures that it will be necessary to take in the case. But then, if we wait still longer, and the trade be permitted to go on, and extend itself farther, more persons will be interested in it, they will, of course, be  
able

able to make a greater opposition to the measure; and thus the evil, though greater, and more justly complained of, will be more difficult to remedy than it is now.

I shall proceed then to state this case as briefly, and as impartially, as I can, and answer all the most important objections that I have heard made to the proposed redress of the grievance complained of.

Few of you probably imagine, or will readily believe, that, in order to raise our sugar, and other West-India commodities, perhaps half a million of persons are annually destroyed, and in a manner peculiarly shocking to humanity. To die by an earthquake, by pestilence, or even by famine, would be merciful compared with the manner in which many of these poor wretches often perish. All the European plantations taken together are said to require an annual supply of sixty thousand fresh slaves; but these are those that remain after so many have died in what is called the *seasoning*, before they can be brought to bear the labour to which they are made to submit; and

after so many more have been lost during the voyage, owing to the mode of their confinement, and ill usage on board, that it is said not less than a hundred thousand are annually exported from Africa. And, some say, that before this ten are destroyed for one that is secured, and safely lodged on board the ships. Certainly, however, many perish, and many more suffer very cruelly before the ships can have got their proper number, and be ready for sailing.

You will ask *who* are the persons that are reduced to this wretched servitude. I answer, some criminals, whose offences may be supposed to deserve it. But these, from the nature of things, can only be a few. Others are prisoners taken in war. Those wars, however, are undertaken for the sake of making the prisoners, and of disposing of them in this manner. But very many are those of their own innocent subjects, whom the tyrannical princes of the country violently seize upon, and sell. Great numbers also are continually kidnapped by any that can surprize and overpower them. And  
these

these scenes of horror extend above a thousand miles within land, for a vast extent of sea coast. It is said by some, that crimes and wars together do not now furnish one slave in an hundred of those that are transported to America, they being generally such as are kidnapped, or sold by their tyrants.

What these poor wretches are made to suffer while they are conducted to such a distance, for such a purpose, before they reach the ships; what they suffer in the ships, and in their cruel bondage afterwards, may in some measure be imagined by us, when we consider that these men have the same feelings with ourselves, and conceive themselves to be as unjustly treated as we should do, if we were violently seized, conveyed away from all our friends, and confined to hard labour all our lives in Africa.

In general, it is said, that in our plantations slaves are employed so many hours every day, excepting Sundays, in the service of their masters, that they have only one for themselves, and but little for sleep. For remissness in labour they are severely beaten,

and for rebellion (as any attempt to recover their liberty is called) they are generally gibbeted alive. The shocking indecencies to which the females are subjected during the voyage, and afterwards, and the cruel separation of the nearest relations and friends, husbands and wives, parents and children, both when they are put on board the ships, and at the place of sale, would be heard with horror by all but those who are habituated to this traffic.

This business was begun by the Portuguese, but the English entered into it so early as the year 1551, though contrary to the express orders of queen Elizabeth; and no Europeans whatever use their slaves with so much cruelty as the English. The Spaniards have made excellent regulations in their favour, in consequence of which the slaves can work out their own freedom; and the French government has also interposed by a code of laws enacted for this very purpose. But the slaves belonging to the English are almost wholly left to the mercy of their masters; and the annual consumption

ion of them is itself a proof of the most cruel usage. For with good treatment even slaves will increase, as the Israelites did in Egypt, and as these very negroes do where their masters are men of sense and humanity. But for this they have no obligation to our laws.

Considering how long this abominable traffic has subsisted, surely, my brethren, it is high time to put an end to it. Hitherto the nation in general has been but little apprized of the enormity and extent of this evil; and those who have been interested in the continuance and extension of it have likewise been interested to conceal the horrid circumstances attending it. Consequently, hitherto, the national guilt has been less than it otherwise would have been in conniving at it. But now that the eyes of the nation in general are in a great measure opened to it, and in the way of being still more so, the national guilt will certainly be greater than ever, if an immediate stop be not put to a species of iniquity  
1 which

which calls so loud for the vengeance of heaven.

It may be said that the particulars I have recited are only the *abuses* of this traffic, and not necessarily attendant upon it, and that those only are to be blamed who are concerned in them. But this is a case in which all that is worth retaining of the thing itself is the abuse of it. For can you believe that the proper criminals of a part of the African coast, or of the whole country of Africa, or indeed of the world, (those whose crimes could, by any equitable construction, be deemed worthy of so severe a punishment) supply our islands with sixty thousand slaves annually, besides more than an equal number, that perish in various ways before they can be brought to a state of settled useful servitude. Small, indeed, would be the stock, and little would it be worth the while of the planters to encourage this traffic, if it procured them only the criminals of Africa, such as it would be for the interest of that country to have banished from it. And  
all

all the rest are innocent men, women, and children, unjustly deprived of their liberty, and condemned to the most cruel bondage, to gratify the avarice of their brutish princes, and of our traders and planters. But no less guilty are we ourselves, who, in order to have our sugars, and other West-India commodities, a little cheaper (though this will be found to be a mistake) connive at, and encourage, these iniquitous proceedings. It is not, therefore, the *abuse* of a trade, but the *trade itself*, that must be abolished, if any good be done in the case.

It is in vain for the country in general, or ourselves as a part of it, to pretend innocence, and leave all the guilt upon those who are immediately concerned in this traffic. For while it is not prohibited by public authority, it will of course be continued; and you must be sensible that it cannot be continued without the shocking abuses I have mentioned. The trade itself, and the abuse of it, are so connected, that to authorize the one is to authorize the other also. And it is an universal maxim, that  
ho



he who makes himself responsible for any measure whatever, is responsible for all that he believes will be the *actual* consequences of that measure; whether, strictly speaking, they be the *necessary* consequences of it or not.

All the distress, therefore, that is occasioned in the country of Africa by the abuse of power, and the frequent wars in order to procure slaves; all the injustice continually exercised by private individuals to trapan others for that purpose; all the barbarities exercised towards the poor wretches so secured, in forcing them on board the ships, in keeping them there, and in their servitude afterwards; nay all the vices in which the slaves are indulged\*, all the cruelties exercised by them, in their attempts to recover their liberty, and the greater cruelties with which such attempts are always punished; will be laid to the account of the people of this country in general, so long as, *knowing*

\* See a note in the excellent sermon preached before the society for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts by the present Bishop of London, p. 11, small edition.

*this*

*this to be the actual state of things, we suffer it to proceed. Both the guilt of the oppressors, and the misery of the oppressed, will be equally laid at our door.*

*This guilt will lie the heaviest, no doubt, upon ministers of state, and all those who have the greatest influence in public measures; but a due proportion of it will be imputed to all those who do not exert whatever influence they may have to prevent it; which includes all who do not petition and remonstrate on the subject. For so much is what every man may do. This is the least we can do to wash our hands, and assert our innocence.*

*Some will farther say, that there is nothing criminal in servitude itself, that it has been the practice of all nations, and all ages; that it was unquestionably allowed in the Old Testament, and that, though frequent mention is made of slaves, christians and others, in the New Testament, there is not even there any censure of the practice.*

*Admitting this, both natural and revealed religion inculcate an humane and equitable treatment*

treatment of all that come under our power. We are still under obligation to do to others as we would that they should do to us, in the same circumstances. And this rule of universal justice and equity is shamefully violated in our present practice. Besides, neither reason nor the scriptures will authorise us to deprive of liberty, those whose own crimes, or at least those of their ancestors, have not forfeited it; and this will go but a very little way to vindicate the shocking transactions that have been recited.

Moreover, we see reason enough to infer that several customs were permitted in the early ages of mankind, such as polygamy, and divorces, which are no longer lawful; and though there is not in the New Testament any express authority for the emancipation of slaves, we may easily see the reason of it, as well as that the spirit of christianity leads to it. To have preached liberty to all captives, and freedom to all slaves, in the age of the apostles would have been deemed rebellion against the government then established. We see however,

ever, that the sentiments of christianity, where they have spread, have actually operated to the emancipation of slaves in a very great part of the western world, which once abounded with them; and those that yet remain in the eastern parts of Europe, there is reason to think will obtain the same favour, and by the same means, in due time. Thus Christ may be said, in a literal sense, to have *preached liberty to the captives*, by his religion leading to the emancipation of slaves.

Christianity teaches us to consider all mankind as *brethren*, equally the subjects of God's moral government here, and alike heirs of immortality hereafter. Now, whether it can be proved that these principles necessarily lead to the emancipation of slaves or not (any more than they lead to take away all inequalities among men, those of rich and poor, masters and servants, &c.) yet they will certainly lead us to give every individual of the human race equal, at least sufficient, advantages for improving his nature, and preparing for a future state.

In this most important respect the poor and the rich, the master and the servant, may be equal. But alas! not so the slave in the West-Indies. It is the interest of the masters, at least they too generally imagine it to be their interest, to treat their slaves (unchecked by any law) in the same manner as they would mere brutes, so that they are deprived of every advantage of their rational nature, and are rendered incapable of deriving any benefit from christianity; from which, indeed, too many of the masters voluntarily deprive themselves \*

\* That it would be for the advantage of masters and slaves, if due attention were given to their instruction, cannot be doubted. Let the reader judge of this from the following note to the Bishop of London's sermon, quoted before, p. 29.  
 " That such a real and general conversion of the negroes, as is here proposed, is no romantic project, but a thing perfectly practicable; and that it would be highly beneficial both to the slaves and their proprietors is evident from the progress already made in this work by the Moravian missionaries. In the Danish islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John, they have profelyted near 6,000 negroes. They have also a congregation of several thousands in the island of Antigua. This fact has been confirmed to me, very lately, by a clergyman who has lived many years in that island; and I have been assured by a gentleman of credit, who saw them at public worship, that their deportment was remarkably serious, attentive,

Of some matters better things may no doubt with truth be said; but in general, I believe it is true of the slaves in the possession of the English, that they have no opportunity of hearing any thing more of christianity than they would have had in the heart of Africa. This certainly should not be permitted by any government which professes to take upon itself the establishment of the christian religion. For surely it will not be maintained, that the object of these establishments is the mere emolument of the clergy, and not the instruction of the subjects in the principles of christianity. This is the *professed* end of the system, and the

attentive, devout, and edifying. And they so greatly surpass all the other slaves in sobriety, diligence, quietness, fidelity, and obedience, that the planters are anxious to have their negroes put under the direction of the missionaries, whom they greatly encourage. In the French islands also, the conversion of the negroes by the Romish priests and missionaries is universal. The consequence is, that the French slaves are much more decent, honest, regular, and orderly, than those of the English. If such be the effects even of *erroneous* systems of faith, what might not be expected from the doctrines of the church of England, inculcated with equal zeal?

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provision

provision that is made for the clergy is only a means to that end \*.

But whether government directly interfere in this business or not, it ought to remove every impediment in the way of religious instruction, and put it in the power of every class of men to profit by the doctrines and precepts of christianity, if they please. If we be christians ourselves, it will be our endeavour to make others so; and there can be no greater evidence of a man being no christian himself, than his indifference about extending the blessings of christianity to others, and especially those whom providence has committed to his care, his children, his servants, and his dependants in general.

But without considering men as made for immortality, and capable of the great blessings they may derive from christianity, there is something in the principles of *human nature*, that declares against servitude, and shews it to be an improper state for *man*,

\* As the West India islands are, I believe, within the diocese of London, should not the bishops of that see have given particular attention to these poor souls under their care.

though not for *brute beasts*. These are capable of being *happy* in a state of servitude, some of them more so than in a state of liberty. The reason is that they have little reflexion on the past, or anticipation of the future. But man has the power of reflexion in an eminent degree; and it is this that makes him miserable in a state of servitude. Through agony of mind, great numbers of Negroes put an end to their own lives, both before they embark, when they are on ship board, and during servitude afterwards. And how wretched must be many others, who have not the resolution to come to that horrid extremity. What the planters call the *seasoning* of the slaves, depends as much upon the *mind* as upon the *body*. While the thoughts of their country, their relations, and friends, are fresh in their minds, and a sense of their abject condition (arising from a comparison of it with their former state) peculiarly pungent, their health will be precarious, and their lives uncertain. And they will be incapable of any degree of

C 2

happiness



happiness in a state of servitude, till their feelings are blunted, and they are reduced to a condition nearly approaching that of the brutes. By a continual attention to some one thing they become expert in it, but they will be incapable of embracing many other objects.

Some Europeans, finding Negro slaves in this wretched degraded condition, to which themselves have reduced them, have had the assurance, and the folly, to pronounce them to be a species of men greatly inferior to themselves. But were Europeans treated in the same manner a sufficient length of time, it is demonstrable that the most intelligent of them all would be no better. Those who see Negroes in their native country, or in circumstances of better treatment among ourselves, are satisfied that they are by no means inferior to Europeans in point of understanding.

According to the observations of a late ingenious traveller, the ancient Egyptians, so famed for their wisdom, were the very same people with the present Negroes.

There



There is therefore something in the nature and constitution of *man* that renders him an improper subject of servitude. He was made for a better condition, being naturally qualified to enjoy and adorn it; and it is acting contrary to nature, to degrade his condition below the standard of his powers.

Besides, the master of a slave is in a situation as improper for his nature as the slave himself. They are both materially injured by the relation. Such a power as that which a master exercises over a slave necessarily tends to make him haughty, cruel, and capricious, unfit for the society of his equals, which is the happiest state of man. Persons who are bred in the West Indies, and have long been in the habit of being served by slaves, are easily distinguished from other men of the same nation. They are not themselves aware how much their natures are debased, and how offensive their behaviour often is to others. We should by all means then, if we have any idea of the *dignity of human nature*, and if we have

at heart the real interest of the master, as well as that of the slave, put an end to this unnatural and improper distinction among those who are partakers of the same common nature.

There are some who say that the Negroes are no less slaves in their own country than in the West Indies, and that, in many respects, their condition is bettered by the removal. Admitting this (which however is far from being true) what right has any man to judge for another, and even to better his condition by force? But the worst circumstance in the condition of the Negroes at home is that which has been occasioned by this traffic, which makes it the interest of the powerful to oppress the weak. Remove this incentive to tyranny and avarice, and there can be no doubt but the Negroes in Africa will be as well treated as the subjects of other arbitrary governments, in which the poor are least liable to be molested, and in which it is the interest of the sovereign to protect and befriend his subjects, as a father his family. Besides  
*political*

*political slavery* is a very different thing from *domestic*. In the former sense all the Turks may be said to be slaves; but they are not such slaves as the Negroes in our West-Indies. They have valuable rights, which the sovereign himself holds sacred, and dares not invade. But what is it that the enslaved Negro can call his own?

The prodigious waste of slaves is itself, as I have observed, a proof of their wretched condition, that they are deprived of all the comforts of domestic life, and treated no better than horses, and other cattle, are with us.

Let not then the good sense of Englishmen suffer their humanity to be restrained from exerting itself by mere words. Let persons call things by what *names* they please, but let *abuses* of every kind be corrected, let impartial *justice* be administered, and let *mercy* be shewn to all that need it; and then a period will be put to this grossest of all abuses, perhaps the greatest, and most crying evil under the sun.

Some may say that the present condition of the Negroes is the fulfilment of an an-

cient prophecy, in which Ham is declared to be the servant of Shem and of Japhet. But it is with most probability thought that this ancient prophecy relates only to the subjugation of the Canaanites, who were descended from Ham, or at most to that of the Tyrians and Carthaginians, who had in a great measure the same origin. However, admitting that this case is in part the fulfilment of that prophecy, that will not exculpate us in our treatment of the Negroes. It was the intention of the Almighty that Joseph should be sold into Egypt, and also that our Saviour should be crucified; but the guilt of Joseph's brethren, and that of the Scribes and Pharisees, was not the less for that circumstance. Besides, the scriptures have been abundantly fulfilled in the case of the subjection of the descendants of Ham. And as God appoints no evil for its own sake, but with a view to a greater good, so it has pleased his wise providence to provide remedies for all evils, which operate in their proper time. It may, therefore, be hoped, that the servitude of the  
Negroes

Negroes is drawing near to its completion ; and perhaps their future condition may be as happy as their present is calamitous. It is not said that the posterity of Ham shall *always* be slaves. When the happy time shall come that *the wolf shall lie down with the lamb*, when the world shall be a scene of universal peace (which the sure word of prophecy certifies to us, and the present state of things makes highly probable) it may be presumed that servitude also will be at an end, and the distinction of *master* and *slave* exist no more.

Some say that if we abandon the slave trade we give up a valuable source of national profit, and yield it to our rivals. Should this be the case, still a christian nation should not hesitate to do what is *right* in itself. A trade so circumstanced as this may justly be termed *wicked*, and *unlawful*, such as no advantage can justify. Also, with nations as with individuals, *honesty is ultimately the best policy*.

I apprehend, however, that we shall be far from being losers by ceasing to trade  
with

with Africa for *men*. The same people, for the sake of the same commodities for which they commit such horrid outrages on one another, would certainly do any thing else to procure them; and the country is fruitful of products which might be of more value to us than all the slaves we bring from thence. In a country of that vast extent, if we favoured the civilization of it, as by our intercourse we might do, instead of contributing to keep it in that state of savage barbarity in which it is at present, the inhabitants, having already a fondness for many of our commodities, would soon arrive at a state in which they would want more of them. If we only give them an idea of a better condition than they at present enjoy, they will soon find the means of obtaining it. If the Negroes are lazy at home (though they who assert this can with little decency maintain that their condition is bettered by slavery) it is because they have no motive to exert themselves. Their wants are few, and easily supplied. But people inhabiting climates as hot as theirs  
are

are laborious and civilized, giving and receiving the greatest benefits by their commercial intercourse with various other nations. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that, were this barbarous slave trade abolished, and the civilization of Africa promoted, for one bale of any kind of goods that we now send to it, we should soon send many, and in a much greater variety; so that the manufacturers of this country in general would find a great benefit from a change of the system, and not one of them would be a loser.

Some will say how shall we get sugar, and the other products of the West-India islands, now raised by slaves, if slavery be abolished. I answer, our first care should be to *do justice*, and *show mercy*, let what will become of the superfluities, or even the necessaries, of life. But I would ask, how did we do before we had brought ourselves into this unnatural situation? There was then no want of sugar, or of some substitute for it, though the use of this luxury was not then so common. Let every thing  
for



for the use of man be raised by men who shall be paid the full price of their labour, and let those who cannot pay that price go without it, as they do with respect to other things.

Besides, it is demonstrable that we may have sugar, and every other commodity that we now raise by means of slaves, even cheaper without slaves; either by encouraging the culture of them in Africa, and other suitable climates\*, and purchasing them there with our own proper commodities (without the expence of settling and defending plantations of our own) or even by the labour of freemen in those plantations. Abolish slavery, and the labour now performed by slaves will not be considered as disgraceful.

It is said that the Quakers, who from the purest principles of humanity and christi-

\* Mr. Osborne, who was employed in the negociation of the late peace, assured me, that sugar might be raised in Africa, by the labour of free negroes, and be sold in London, at one-half the price that we now give for it; but that it would be necessary to secure the favour of the chiefs by presents from government. He had had a plantation of his own in that country, on which he employed, as nearly as I can remember, three hundred negroes.

anity manumitted their slaves, found, even to their surprize, that they gained more by their service as freemen, when they paid them wages, than they did by them as slaves, when they gave them no wages at all; the Negroes laboured so much more chearfully, and did so much more work, when freemen than when slaves.

At all events, let servitude be abolished, and leave it to the ingenuity and industry of our countrymen to find a substitute for it. When things are brought into a complex and unnatural state, it is not easy to revert to that which is proper and natural; but in time it will be done. And perhaps the immediate emancipation of all slaves would be an improper, because in fact no humane measure. Those who have been long slaves would not know how to make a proper use of freedom. But if a stop was put to the farther importation of slaves, it would immediately become the interest of the masters to make the most of their present stock, and consequently to treat their slaves with more humanity; so that in time their condition

condition would be the same with that of the *villeins* in the Feudal times of this country; and by degrees approach to that of *freemen*. Or freedom might be placed within the reach of the more industrious of the slaves, as it is with the Spaniards and French; and the man who shall have worked himself free would know how to make a proper use of his freedom, and would be prepared to make a valuable member of society. However, to take the most prudent measures in the case must be left to the wisdom of parliament. Ours is to express our good wishes in the cause, and by our zeal to excite them to do what they shall deem the most proper.

What is proposed to be done by England is already done in Virginia, Delaware, and Rhode Island, and is likely to take place in all the States of America\*. It will be an

\* One of the North American provinces, as they then were (I think it was New-York) some time before the commencement of the American war, passed a law against the importation of slaves, but on account of the opposition made to it by some merchants in England it was not confirmed in the Privy Council of this country. Shall we say that the government which will have *slaves* does not deserve to have *subjects*?

honour

honour to this country, and the most glorious event in the present reign, if the example should be followed here. It will be honourable to every person in proportion to the share he shall have in bringing it about. But in this we must all give place to the Quakers, who were the first to shew themselves friends to the rights of humanity; and what is more, who were the first to decline any advantage which they, in common with others, might have derived from this inhuman traffic with our own species.

With Englishmen I may be allowed to argue from that *love of liberty* by which they profess to be actuated. For surely we are not such selfish beings, as to wish to engross every thing valuable. If we have any sentiments of benevolence, or sense of common equity, we shall wish to see every thing extended to others that we covet for ourselves. As we Englishmen, then, would least brook the condition of the Negroes in our plantations, we ought to have the most compassion for them, and, remote as they are from us in situation and condition, we  
should

should consider them as brethren and neighbours, and therefore exert ourselves to the utmost for their relief.

Englishmen are also no less renowned for their *generosity* than for their love of liberty. Our charities, for every describable human want, are far more numerous than those of any other nation in the world. They have often been extended to strangers as well as to natives. Let the same principle operate on this occasion, than which none can more loudly call for it. If those be the most proper objects of generosity who stand in the most need of it (and according to my text we should consider ourselves as *neighbours* to all those to whom we have an opportunity of acting a neighbourly or friendly part) none can stand to us in that relation more nearly than the wretched Negroes; no part of the human race suffering more, or more unjustly; or who have it less in their power to help themselves. As their complaints cannot even be heard by those who have the power to relieve them, and they are, indeed, utterly ignorant of the existence  
of

of any such power on earth, *we* should make their complaints, and urge their pleas for them. As it is in our power to give them *this assistance*, we are in duty bound to do it. For it is an universal truth, that the *obligation* to do a good office ever accompanies the *power* of doing it. Where God gives the one, he requires the other.

I think myself peculiarly happy that, in recommending the relief of the distressed African slaves, I can join heartily with every denomination of christians in the country, the catholics, the members of the establishment, and dissenters of all denominations. This is not the cause of unitarianism, of arianism, or of trinitarianism, but simply that of *humanity*, and our common *christianity*; and as I have frequently, and with peculiar pleasure, observed, all the articles on which we differ are trifling compared to those with respect to which all christians are, and ever have been, agreed.

**We all believe in the obligation of the moral duties of life; we all believe in the divine mission of Christ, in a righteous providence**

providence of God here, and in a state of rewards and punishments hereafter; and these are the only things that are of real efficacy in religion. Other things, indeed, have their value, and great value; but it is of a kind far inferior to this. They may recommend our religion to those who are not much disposed to receive it, and they may lead us to contemplate it with more satisfaction ourselves, as more agreeable to reason, and the scriptures (and no real friend of revelation can wish to see these things at variance) but any species of christianity, really believed, and acted upon, will make men sober, benevolent, and pious; good friends, and good neighbours, kind and useful in all the relations of life, entirely resigned to the will of God, and disposed to co-operate in all that he shall recommend to us.

Had the infinitely superior importance of these great articles of christian faith, which immediately respect, and effectually secure, the great object of christianity (*which brings life and immortality to light,* and which was given to bless mankind  
in

*in turning them from their iniquities*) the establishment of other articles, which have little or no relation to this great object, would not have been so eagerly contended for. It would have been thought sufficient to enforce the belief of such things as really distinguish christians from other men; and that with respect to things of less moment, all christians might be permitted to think and act as they pleased, provided they gave no disturbance to their neighbours. Upon this reasonable plan, *truth* would have its proper advantage over error; whereas at present, whatever *errors* may happen to be established, being supported by *power*, their reign (as in the days of popish darkness and superstition) will be greatly prolonged. But it is, no doubt, for the best, that truth should have an opportunity of triumphing, as we may be confident it will, in circumstances the most unfavourable to its propagation. In similar circumstances was christianity itself at its first promulgation. Let us, then, think no more than may be necessary of the things on which we differ,



which tends to create dislike, and as much as possible on those with respect to which we are agreed, which may promote mutual candour, love, and affection.

It seems to be the intention of Divine Providence, that every thing should be brought to perfection by degrees. If we have any faith in history and prophecy, the last age of the world is to be infinitely preferable to any thing that we have yet experienced; and certainly the present state of things is preferable to any that is past. By means of christianity chiefly, the great governor of the world is gradually bringing on a state of universal peace and happiness, which must, as I have observed, imply the abolition of slavery, as well as of every other evil. But God works by *instruments*; and his instruments in things that respect mankind, are chiefly men.

Let us then consider ourselves as being *workers, together with God*, in bringing about an improved state of things, in bettering the condition of our species, and extending the just rights of humanity to all  
our

our race; thus recommending the gospel which we all profess, that gospel which is calculated to bring *peace upon earth, and good will to men*, and which, when it shall be universally received and obeyed, will make all mankind righteous and happy. Thus it will make even this world a real paradise, and fit us for a state of greater glory and happiness in another.

A PRAYER.

## A P R A Y E R.

**A**LMIGHTY, and ever-blessed God, who hast of *one blood made all nations of men, to dwell upon the face of all the earth, and hast determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation*; who art equally the God, and the *father, of all the families of the earth, and who art the refuge of the oppressed*; extend thy compassion, we beseech thee, to all thine offspring, and our brethren, of mankind.

Do thou, *in whose hand are the hearts of all men, and who turnest them, as the rivers of water, which way soever thou pleasest*, awaken in the minds of all who are at ease, a due feeling for the miserable; that those who have the power to do it, may *loose all the bands of wickedness, undo all heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and break every unjust yoke*; and may the great blessings which, by thy favour, we enjoy, be equally shared by all the human race.

More especially, may those of our species who, in any part of the world, are outwardly in the condition of brute beasts, but who are often inwardly more afflicted than brute beasts are capable of being, be restored to the common rights of humanity; and by the blessings of civilization, and equitable government, may they be prepared to receive the superior advantages of christianity, in the knowledge of thy truth, and the prospect

pect of a happy immortality, as revealed to mankind by thy son Jesus Christ; that by means of the glad tidings of the gospel, they may be *turned from darkness to light, receiving the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified.* Thus may the kingdom of thy son be extended, and fill the whole earth.

To prepare the way for those glorious times, when the gospel shall be universally received, remove from it those corruptions and abuses, which still, alas! too generally, and too closely, adhere to it, so as greatly to obstruct its progress. But, above all, may those who profess it, be careful to adorn it by a suitable life and conversation, that *others, seeing their good works, may glorify thee their father in heaven.* And may it not be our condemnation, a condemnation greater than that of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, *that light is come into the world, but that we have loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil.*

May we shew the value we have for the blessings of christianity, by our exertions both to free it from every thing that debases it, and to impart it, thus purified from base alloy, to others; being the instruments in thy hand of diffusing truth, virtue, and happiness through the world.

Bless our native country. May we continue to share thy favour, in the enjoyment  
of

of our liberties, civil and religious; and in consequence of making a suitable improvement of our many advantages, may we be *that happy people whose God is the Lord*. If any individuals of our nation, from an inordinate love of gain, have been guilty of injustice and oppression, above those of other nations, may the generosity of others be roused to greater exertions, in order to put a stop to it; and, as far as possible, may reparation be made for past wrongs, by our superior regard to equity and humanity in future time.

Bless thy servant our sovereign; *establish his throne in righteousness*, and make his reign a blessing to the latest posterity. May it be distinguished by every thing that can render a reign truly illustrious, and memorable; by the extension of science, of arts, manufactures, and commerce, as the source of national prosperity, but still more by the greater purity of christian faith, by removing every impediment in the way of a farther reformation, and extending the blessings of civilization and true religion to the most distant parts of the earth.

Hear us, gracious God, we intreat thee, in these our requests, as far as shall be agreeable to thy infinite wisdom and goodness. We ask it as the disciples of thy son Jesus Christ, through whom, to thee, O Father, the *only living and true God*, be ascribed everlasting praises. Amen.

A  
DISCOURSE  
ON THE  
RESURRECTION OF JESUS.



*The Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus  
considered,*

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IN A

# DISCOURSE

FIRST DELIVERED IN

THE ASSEMBLY-ROOM, AT BUXTON,

*On Sunday, September 19, 1790.*

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ADDRESS TO THE JEWS.

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*By Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.*

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*Birmingham,*

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

**T**HE following discourse was composed while I was at Buxton, in the course of the last summer, in consequence of being requested to preach to the company in the assembly-room, after the usual morning prayers of the church of England. Having no sermon with me that I thought so proper as I could wish for so mixed an audience, I composed *this*, which I thought would offend no christian, but tend to confirm the faith of all; and which I also hoped might make a favourable impression on unbelievers, some of whom it was probable would be my hearers. Both these objects I have reason to think were, in some measure, gained; and in compliance with the request of some who were my hearers at that time, and of many others who have heard the discourse, much enlarged and improved, since, I now publish it.

Let any man who is an object of dislike, as I am to the clergy of the church of England, con-

duct himself with ever so much prudence and caution, I do not think it is possible for him to avoid giving offence. On this occasion, however, I flattered myself that I had succeeded; but I have since found that I did not. A person, who I believe may be stiled a dignitary of the church of England, has been very free with his virulent invectives against me on this most innocent business; asserting, on the authority, he says, of those who were present, and who, it is supposed, were also clergymen, that I in a manner forced myself upon the audience, by *requesting* to preach to them, which he calls "a most indecent intrusion\*," and that I took the opportunity of "insulting the faith" and the service of those who attended it," that by "desiring to have the litany omitted on that occasion, I shewed the most pointed disapprobation of the service, and took upon myself to rule and direct the service of the church of England;" that my discourse "gave great offence to several persons of respectable understanding, who uniformly represented it as calculated to weaken the evidence of our Lord's resurrection as a divine and miraculous fact; wrought in conformity to the antient prophecies;" that "it was scarcely attended to with patience," and that "in opposition to the solemn service which the congregation had just before offered to the trinity, and in contradiction

\* The passages marked with inverted commas, are from the clergyman's own letter, which was written with deliberation, on purpose to be shewn to me.

“to those rules of the church, which forbid the  
“maintaining of opposite doctrines by different  
“preachers, I closed the whole with an unitarian  
“prayer.” On the whole, he adds, “I easily  
“perceive where this would end, if the Doctor’s  
“power was equal to the disposition he has mani-  
“fested towards the church of England. There  
“would be as little toleration of those who should  
“use the liturgy, as there was in the days of  
“Cromwell.

All this, and much more, having, as I have been informed, been said on the occasion, it may not be amiss to give the following short account of the matter; and hundreds who were present can witness the truth or falsehood of the greatest part of it.

Having, at the unexpected request of the company at the inn where I lodged, read a sermon to them on a Sunday evening; on the Tuesday following, General Stratton, and Mr. Sligo, a gentleman of fortune in Scotland, came to me, deputed, as they said, by the company at the Grand Hotel, and the other houses near the Baths, to request that I would give them a sermon on the Sunday following. I replied that, if it was the wish of the company, I would readily comply with it; and returning my compliments to them, desired them to name the time and place. Some time after this they came to me again, and said

that the company, having considered of it, were of opinion that the most convenient place would be the assembly-room; and that the time that would best suit them all would be after their usual morning service, which however, with great liberality, they said they did not desire me to attend, as I might not approve of it; and that in this case I might be in the adjoining card room till it was over.

Now, though I certainly do object, and very seriously, to do any thing that should be construed into a joining in trinitarian worship, or offering to any creature, how distinguished soever, that homage to which I consider the one true God, the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, to be alone entitled, I make no scruple of attending the worship of any human beings occasionally, as a stranger and spectator; and I had no intention of absenting myself on the present occasion, till I found I could not prevail on the clergyman who read the prayers to shorten the service, which, on account of the length of my discourse, I wished him to do.

Not succeeding in this, I took an opportunity some time after the prayers were begun, of retiring into the card-room, for the sake of looking over my discourse, and striking out such parts of it as could best be omitted. When this was done, I returned to the prayers before they were quite finished.

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finished. Still, however, my discourse was considerably longer than usual: but I was heard with the greatest attention, nor did I perceive any marks of disapprobation from any of the company. I concluded the service with a short prayer, addressed, as most of the prayers in the liturgy of the church of England are, to the Father only; so that if this was a contradiction to the trinitarian forms in the same liturgy, some of the prayers in this book are contradictory to the rest.

After the service, I was thanked not only by General Stratton and Mr. Sligo in the name, as they said, of the company, but by many of the most respectable persons present, some of whom avowed religious sentiments with respect to the trinity very different from mine; and in consequence of a previous invitation by the Provost of the university of Dublin, I dined at the Grand Hotel, where some of the particulars of my sermon, being new to part of the company, were the subject of conversation, and every thing that I heard was much in favour of it. Several clergymen were present at my discourse, and one of them, I was told, expressed much approbation of it. Others, it appears, were much offended at my being asked to preach on this occasion, and one of them, I was told, made an attempt, but without success, to express his disapprobation, in a discourse composed on purpose for the Sunday following. This, however, I did not know at the time, for  
the

the next morning I proceeded on my journey, and left the place.

Much of the offence that I gave on this occasion was by "taking upon me" (as this dignitary says) "to perform a part of the ministry of the church of England, in a place of that description." Now, not to observe, that the place in which I preached was not consecrated, and that the appropriation of the building to the offices of any particular mode of religion was not a thing to be considered by *me*, but by those who applied to me to officiate in it, I see no reason why christians of the most opposite sentiments may not meet to worship together, and edify one another, on principles that are common to them all, avoiding the introduction of any that would give offence. If I had an opportunity (which I would by no means decline) of preaching before a society of high calvinists, or the most rigid catholics, I would do it in such a manner as not to offend any of them, and yet I should have a sufficient choice of topics on which to discourse. For the most important articles, not only of christian practice, but also of christian faith, are those in which all who ever called themselves christians are, and always were, agreed; nor should I have any scruple to desire any christian minister, of whatever denomination, to preach for me, if I knew him to be a man of sense and discretion, who would observe the same rule of prudence in my pulpit, that I should make a point of doing in his.

I am

## THE PREFACE.

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I am not sorry to have this opportunity of saying that I and my congregation gave this proof of our liberality in this respect the very last year, by inviting Mr. Berington, a catholic priest in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, to preach our annual Sunday-school sermon. All the subscribers to that charity were convened on the occasion, after it had been the subject of much conversation several weeks before; and on my proposing it, it was cheerfully and unanimously acceded to; and one of the company very pleasantly and properly said that, as the devotional part of the service on that occasion would fall to me, he hoped that on that day, I would omit praying for the downfall of antichrist; which I very readily engaged to do. The invitation was accordingly sent, and as the reader will see, by a copy of the letters which he will find subjoined to this Preface, was very properly received, though it was not complied with, for prudential considerations, which I hope will not exist long.

I should have been ashamed of any congregation to which I officiate, had they made any difficulty of acting so liberal a part. We did not desire Mr. Berington to celebrate mass, or to do any thing else in which we could not concur with him; nor, I am confident, would he obtrude upon his audience any sentiments that he knew would be displeasing to them; and then what objection could there be to his principles as a catholic, when  
they



they did not appear. A Jew, or a Mahometan, might recommend charity, and what christian could object to hear him do it, if he did it well. From officiating in our places of public worship no men of sense, and of good moral characters, are excluded by any forms of consecration. We are ready to accept of the services of any person by whose discourses we can hope to be edified. Would all christians act upon this generous principle, and be ready to meet on every piece of ground that was common to them, true catholicism would be greatly promoted, prejudices would much sooner die away, and truth, which we are all equally interested in discovering, would have a much better opportunity of prevailing over error than it now has.

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*To the Rev. Mr. Berington.*

DEAR SIR,

It is with peculiar satisfaction that I communicate to you the very hearty and unanimous request of the subscribers to our Sunday school, to give us a sermon at the New Meeting, on any Sunday that shall be most convenient to yourself, within about a month from this time, when a collection will be made for the purpose, in aid of our subscription.

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subscription. We have all been charmed with your excellent and liberal tract on the subject, and we wish to show the world that, different as our persuasions are, we can meet together on the common principles of christianity and benevolence.

With very great respect, I am,

Dear Sir,

*Birmingham,*  
*Oct. 18, 1790.*

Yours sincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

*Mr. Berington's Answer.*

DEAR SIR,

THE request of the subscribers to your Sunday school, which you have communicated to me, has given me great pleasure, though it has excited my surprize. It seems to indicate the dawn of better days, when difference in speculative belief shall no longer divide the hearts of christians. The novelty only of the proposal surprized me. Nor can I sufficiently admire the liberality of sentiment manifested by the subscribers on the occasion, a liberality which at all times I should be most happy to imitate, and to enforce. But I cannot comply with their request. It would give offence, I fear, to the society of which I am a member, (so unprecedented is the measure) and willingly I would not shock even the prejudices of others, unless by that shock I might reasonably hope to surmount them. The temper of the times likewise must be weighed,

weighed, lest by precipitance we rather check, than encourage, that happy tendency to benevolent and generous sentiments which rapidly advances among those of my persuasion, and which you, and other friends to the best interests of men, are effectually labouring to establish in a wider sphere.

I beg, Sir, you will convey my apology to the subscribers in the most grateful terms. They may know that I truly value the opinion they entertain of me, and that though, from prudential motives, I cannot comply with the letter of their request, it shall be my endeavour to serve the great cause they patronize by every means in my power. We differ, it is true, in points to which men, I think, have given an undue weight ; but the common principles of christianity and benevolence, as you express it, must ever remain, I trust, equally dear to us all.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours most sincerely,

J. BERINGTON.

*Oscot,*  
Oct. 20, 1790.

THE subscribers to the Sunday-school being convened to receive this answer, we could only lament that any reasons of prudence should be an obstacle to Mr. Berington's compliance with our request, and even defer our exhibiting to the world an example of that liberality in which christians are so much deficient, and which we wished to take this opportunity of recommending.

*An*



## *An Address to the Jews\*.*

Worshippers of the One True God,

**U**NDER this noble appellation, unhappily not as yet applicable to the great body of christians, it is with peculiar satisfaction that I address you; having in this respect the honour to rank with you. But do not be offended that the generality of christians should have been drawn aside into idolatry, worshipping a creature instead of the creator, when your own ancestors, notwithstanding the manifest tokens of divine power accompanying them, and though he stood in a peculiar relation to them, and shewed them distinguished favour, were for many ages drawn aside in a similar manner, worshipping the sun, the moon, and the host of heaven, instead of the great Being who made them. Time and discipline brought you to a just sense of your duty, and things are evidently taking the same course with christians.

The time is happily come when the eyes of great numbers are opened to see their errors; and being enlightened themselves, they are zealous to give their light to their brethren.

\* An amicable conference with some Jews who heard this discourse was the occasion of this address to them. A freer intercourse with Jews and christians would have a good effect on both.

We

We are now well satisfied that Jesus Christ, though a true prophet of God, is no more an object of divine worship than Moses, or any other prophet. He was himself, as one of your nation, a humble worshipper of the God of your fathers, and he instructed his followers to worship no other than him. These christians are called *unitarians*, in opposition to the *trinitarians*, who pay divine honours to two other persons besides *the one God and Father of all*; and you cannot have been so inattentive to the present state of things among christians, as not to perceive that the unitarian doctrine is very rapidly gaining ground. The belief of the *divine unity*, and also that of the proper *humanity of Christ* are not now the private opinions of a few persons only, which some time ago they were almost afraid to avow, but they are publicly professed by great numbers, the most respectable for their ability, their learning, and their piety, among christians. They are also not confined to one nation, but are to be found in almost every part of the christian world. Nor are you to judge of the number of unitarians from those who openly profess themselves to be so. They now abound in all churches professedly trinitarian, though, from timidity, or some other motive, which I do not undertake to defend, they do not make a public avowal of their sentiments. By this means, however, things are ripening apace for a general declaration in favour of unitarianism whenever circumstances shall be favourable to it.

I was



I was much surprized, but far from being displeased, at one instance of your extreme scrupulosity on this subject. Many of you, when you heard me deliver the following discourse in Essex Chapel, were, I find, much offended at my calling Christ *Lord*, thinking it to be an appellation too nearly approaching to those which in the scriptures are appropriated to God. We cannot well be too cautious how we ascribe to any creature, though the most distinguished prophet, those titles which are more usually given to the supreme Being. But be assured that I had no such meaning, or intention; nor would any Englishman so understand me. By the term *Lord* we simply mean *master*, which all christians acknowledge Christ to be, since God has appointed him to be our teacher and instructor, and we therefore call ourselves by his name. Be assured also that I would never make use of the term again, if I thought that, after reflecting on the subject, it would give you the least offence.

Agreeing with you in this fundamental principle of all religion, particularly intrusted, as it were, to the guardianship of your nation; when you were set apart from the rest of the world, you will naturally look upon us with less aversion than you have hitherto justly done christians in general; and I hope you will be induced to give a more patient and candid attention to what we have to propose in favour of the divine mission of Christ, and compare our arguments with those which you

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are

are able to produce in proof of the divine mission of Moses, and that of your other prophets.

I have already addressed you twice at large upon this important subject; and writing, as you are satisfied, from a principle of the purest goodwill to your nation, I am happy to find, that my *Letters* have not displeased you. Happy indeed, should I think myself to be, in any measure, the instrument in the hand of divine providence of opening the eyes of any of you to your true interest, and thereby of restoring you to the favour of God, and to that future glorious state which is destined for you. This great event, however, God will bring about in his own time, in his own way, and by whatever instruments he pleases. And I hope the time is approaching, when, as the prophet Zechariah (chap. xii. 10.) has foretold, “he will pour upon you the spirit of grace and of supplication, and when you shall look upon him whom you have pierced, and shall mourn for him as for an only son,” as sensible of the wickedness of your ancestors in rejecting and crucifying Jesus, avowing yourselves his disciples.

Having before requested your attention to the evidences of christianity in general, let me now solicit it to that of the resurrection of Jesus in particular, as the most important fact in the gospel history. Examine the evidence which I here lay before you, as you would that of any other  
historical

historical facts, such as those which prove the divine mission of Moses, and consider whether it be not equally clear and satisfactory. And if Jesus, after declaring that he came from God, and after resting the proof of his divine mission in a more especial manner on his own resurrection from the dead, did actually rise from the dead, to the compleat satisfaction of a sufficient number of the most competent witnesses, you must acknowledge that he was no impostor, and that whatever he declared as from God may be depended upon, as much as that which Moses delivered in his name.

Do not content yourselves, as I perceive you are apt to do, with an admiration of your laws, as delivered down to you from your forefathers, and with your obligation, as their descendants, to observe them; but carefully review the *history* of your ancestors, and of your laws, and consider the *reasons* they had to believe that they came from God. Your sacred books tell you, and I doubt not they tell you truly, that your fathers themselves, besides seeing the miracles of Moses, passed through the Red sea, which was divided in a miraculous manner for them, and then heard the ten commandments delivered in an audible voice from Mount Sinai. But do you consider the *authority* of those books, and the reasons why you receive them as authentic histories of past events, and then compare this evidence with that which christians alledge for the authority of the books of the New Testament. And if the facts there recorded be true, if Jesus was declared to be the son of God by an audible voice




voice from heaven; if, like Moses he wrought real miracles, or did such things as <sup>no</sup> ~~an~~ man could have done if God had not been with him; if, after being put to death in the most public manner, God raised him from the dead, and, in the sight of numbers of his followers, took him up into heaven, his divine mission can no more be questioned than that of Moses.

Believing this, you ought to declare yourselves christians, though without ceasing to be Jews, or discontinuing any of the observances of your own law, which Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil, and to confirm; having solemnly declared (Mat. 5. xviii.) that "till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

If Jesus was a true prophet, he must likewise be *the Messiah*, whom Daniel expressly says was to be *cut off*, though under a prince of the house of David (whom, if you please, you may call another Messiah, or a person anointed of God for a great purpose respecting your nation) you will be restored to your own country, and become the most distinguished people upon earth.

What then can be your great objection to receiving one more prophet of your own nation than you have hitherto done, and consequently complying with all his injunctions, one of which is to be baptized, in token of your new profession, and another to celebrate the Lord's supper, as you do the passover.




Do not wonder that God should require thus much of you by Christ, when he required so much more by Moses, though he made no such addition to your observances by any of the intermediate prophets. Christ was the most distinguished prophet that your nation ever produced; as by him God revealed to mankind in a more satisfactory manner than, as far as appears, he had ever done before, the great doctrine of a resurrection to a future immortal life; and as by his means the gentile world was brought to the knowledge and worship of the God of your fathers, so as to make a new dispensation, and a most distinguished æra in the religious history of the world. This great object you see is in a great measure effected, and it would have been compleatly so long ago, if the corruptions of christianity, and especially the introduction of the idolatrous worship of Jesus Christ, and other human beings, had not put a stop to it. But when this great abomination shall be removed, as there can be no doubt that it soon will be, christianity will resume its pristine vigour, and enlighten and bless the whole world; when you will be no longer able to charge christians with *idolatry*, but, as your prophets say, when *God will be one, and his name one.*

I am happy to find that you think it a considerable advantage to you that so great a part of the world is christian, rather than heathen, and that you live among people who respect your scriptures as much as you do yourselves. This advantage

vantage you would not have had among the Mahometans, who, though they allow the inspiration of your prophets, as well as that of Jesus Christ, think that all former revelations were superseded by their prophet Mahomet; so that they make no use of your scriptures or ours, but treat these sacred books with great contempt. In time, I doubt not, you will find yourselves still more indebted to christians than you have hitherto been, and that the unspeakable obligations we are under to you will be repaid by our services, in your conversion to christianity. We owe you much indeed, but we live in the hope of discharging the debt. In the mean time we must content ourselves with shewing our gratitude and good-will; reflecting on the important articles in which we agree with you, and which we derived from you.

The great object of our worship, and all the great articles of our faith, will then be the same. We agree in the belief of one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that this God is gracious and merciful to all the truly penitent, as no doubt he will be to you, when you shall turn to him with your whole hearts. "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established, believe his prophets, so shall you prosper. 2 Chron. xx. 20. Moses, speaking of your present calamitous state, dispersed among all the nations of the world, says, Deut. iv. 29. "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with  
"all



“ all thy heart, and with all thy soul. When thou  
“ art in tribulation and all these things” (viz. the  
“ curses he had mentioned) “ are come upon thee,  
“ even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy  
“ God, and be obedient to his voice (for the Lord  
“ thy God is a merciful God) he will not forsake  
“ thee, neither destroy thee, neither forget the cove-  
“ nant of thy fathers, which he sware unto thee.”

This God of your fathers seems now to be preparing the way, in the course of his unsearchable providence, for your restoration to his favour, and to your own country. Let nothing be wanting on your part to render yourselves the proper objects of such great favour. Of all nations you alone have been distinguished by a particular providence, so that your outward prosperity has ever kept pace with your faith and obedience; and this I doubt not will be the case to the end of time.

All your persecutions have arisen from *trinitarian*, i. e. *idolatrous* christians, but all *unitarians* will naturally love and respect you, acknowledging their unspeakable obligations to you, as the antient depositories of the great article of their faith. As one of them, and second to none in love and respect for you, I entreat your attention to this discourse; and with my earnest prayers for your happiness, temporal and eternal, I subscribe myself, as before,

Your brother in the sole worship of the  
*Birmingham,*      one living and true God,  
*May 20, 1791.*

J. PRIESTLEY.



A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

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BUT NOW IS CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD, AND BECOME  
THE FIRST FRUITS OF THEM THAT SLEPT.

I Cor. xv. 20.

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**W**E cannot imagine any question more interesting to man, than whether he shall survive the grave, so that he shall live, and especially live for ever, after he has been dead. Every question relating to our condition *here* is of no moment at all when compared to this.

Nothing that we see in nature can lead us to form any such expectation. I say *expectation*. For though some appearances may lead us to indulge a *wish*, and in some persons perhaps encourage a *hope*, of another life after this, yet if we were left to the mere light of nature, it would remain improbable upon the whole;

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so

so that we could not, in this situation, die with any reasonable prospect of living again.

The constitution of man very much resembles that of other animals. They have the same senses of body, and the same faculties of mind, differing from us only in *degree*; man being more intelligent than they, and therefore capable of greater refinement in his passions and affections, and having greater comprehension of mind, so as to take into his view more of the past, and of the future, together with the present, than they can. This, however, amounts to no difference in *kind*; and the difference that we see among other animals in these respects, is as great as that which subsists between us and the highest of them; the oyster, for example, and the elephant. Consequently, it would be natural to conclude that one fate awaits us all, the superior kinds of animals as well as the inferior, and man as well as them all. When we die, we are equally subject to corruption, and a total dissolution of the parts of which we consist, without any appearance of their ever being re-assembled, and re-arranged as they were before, or of any other Being, in a new  
form.



form, resulting from them. Death is a great veil, which no man can draw aside, and beyond which all is darkness.

But were it possible, by the force of any reasoning, to discover the *probability* of a future state (and few persons will pretend that they can, by the light of nature, arrive at *certainty* with respect to it) the reasons, whatever they were, that made so great an event probable to one, might give no satisfaction to another.

Besides, the magnitude of the question is such, and the interest we have in the solution of it is so great, that nothing but the strongest and clearest evidence could give general satisfaction with respect to it. Nothing less than a positive assurance from our Maker himself could answer this purpose. And this (which, if any thing could be said to require it, did so) revelation informs us has been given, and in such a manner as must give entire satisfaction to every unprejudiced mind, *life and immortality being fully brought to light by the gospel*, as I hope to evince in the prosecution of this discourse.



It could not be expected that the Divine Being should give this assurance to every individual of the human race. It would be sufficient if it was given to some, to be communicated, with proper evidence of the fact, to others; and unless the communication was made to every person, this is all that could be done in the case. For this truth is of such a nature as to be incapable of strict, or mathematical, demonstration, such as that of *twice two* making *four*, but only of such proof as *historical facts* are capable of. But the evidence of a future state should not be undervalued on that account; because there are no kinds of truth of which we have a more firm persuasion than of those of the historical kind; as for example, that such a person as Julius Cæsar once lived at Rome, and that there exists at present such a city as Constantinople. What propositions do we believe more firmly than we do these? Now if our faith in a future life can be shewn to be as well founded as these are, it is quite sufficient for the purpose; because it will be a faith that men will not scruple to *act* upon. They would then live as expectants of immortality, and would  
do

nothing that should imply a doubt of a future state. That is, they would lead virtuous lives, which is the end of all religion.

In what manner God was pleased to impart to mankind the first information concerning a future life we are not now acquainted, we have no account of it in the writings of Moses, or in any other writings now extant. But we see the *effect* of it in the Jews, who to this day are all firm believers in it; and, with few exceptions, appear always to have believed in it. We may, therefore, presume that, in some period of time past, mankind, at least the ancestors of that nation, had satisfactory evidence of the Divine Being having given them this assurance. Because it is an idea that we cannot well suppose would have occurred to men themselves.

That there may be something in man which continues to exist, notwithstanding the change that takes place in him at death, may be imagined. But, upon that principle, man cannot be said properly to *die* at all. He only ceases to exist in some other form or manner. But that man should really *die*, and continuing in a state of death, come to exist again at a future period, that is, that

there should be a proper *resurrection of the dead*, which is the faith of the Jews, and Christians (being, I must now presume, the clear doctrine of both the Old and the New Testament) I will venture to say must ever have appeared in the highest degree improbable, and therefore incredible. Nothing but the express assurance of the great Being who made men could have satisfied them that he would revive them in those circumstances.

The original record of the communication of this most important truth having been lost, it pleased the Divine Being to renew it by Jesus Christ, the founder of our religion; who not only asserted the doctrine, as from God, and confirmed it by miracles, or such works as no man could have done if God had not been with him; but who himself actually died and rose again, as a proof of the reality of the thing. And this seems to have been all the evidence that mankind could have asked, if the most intelligent, and the most incredulous of them, had been required to say what would satisfy them.

As Jesus rested the evidence of his divine mission, and consequently his authority to preach the doctrine of a future life, in a more particular

particular manner upon his own resurrection from the dead ; and as, in all cases, examples have the greatest weight with mankind, I shall confine myself at this time to the consideration of the circumstances of his death and resurrection, shewing them to have been such as render those important events in the highest degree credible, both at the time when they took place; and, which is of much more consequence, in all future time. So that, had mankind, not only in that period, but in the most distant ages, been required to name the evidence that would give them the most satisfaction, it will appear that it has been given them; and that, in any other circumstances than the actual ones, the events would have appeared less credible than they do at present.

In the first place, however, I would briefly premise, that Jesus Christ was not only an uncommon man, but an uncommon prophet, the circumstances in which he appeared having been calculated to excite greater attention to him than to any other person who had ever appeared in that character; his coming having been announced some centuries before his birth; another prophet having been commissioned to declare his more immediate ap-

pearance, and no other prophet having appeared for near four hundred years before his immediate predecessor.

This circumstance alone, independently of any others, shews that the Jews, among whom Jesus appeared, were not a credulous nation. For if this had been the case, as they are well known to have been very proud of having had prophets among them, there would have been, in so long a period, many false pretensions to prophecy ; whereas in all that time there does not appear to have been any pretension of this kind. Nay the whole history of the Jews shews that, if any nation was to have been chosen for a theatre of prophecy, none could have been so proper for the purpose as that of the Jews ; because they appear to have been the least credulous, more disposed to reject, than eagerly to receive, any prophets that were sent to them, Moses himself, the great pride of their nation, least of all excepted. They were ever fond of the ceremonies and religious rites of their neighbours, but always ready to reject their own, till repeatedly brought back to the observance of them by the severest judgments.

Besides,

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Besides, though a great prophet, under the denomination of *the Messiah*, was expected by the body of the Jewish nation, the idea they had universally conceived of him was such, that, though Jesus truly bore that character, he was, in fact, such a person as they were least likely to receive in it. Their idea of the Messiah was that of *a king*, and a *conqueror*, to which Jesus made no pretensions. Nothing, therefore, but the most overbearing evidence could be expected to induce any Jew to receive in that character one who disclaimed all worldly honours, and who left his nation in the abject condition in which he found it. I will venture to say we have no example in history of any national prejudice so deeply rooted as this among the Jews, of their Messiah being to be a temporal prince, destined to rescue their nation from servitude, and to make them the most distinguished people upon the face of the earth. It is found among all the Jews, in all parts of the world, to this very day. No time, or calamities, seem capable of extinguishing it. Evidence, therefore, that could subdue such a prejudice as this, in any considerable number of *Jews*, must have been of the most satisfactory kind.

In

In this nation did Jesus appear, after being announced by John the Baptist, who, to draw the more attention upon him, solemnly baptized those who received his doctrine, the chief article of which was the speedy approach of another prophet much greater than himself. An audible voice from heaven was the token by which John knew that Jesus was the person whom he was sent to precede, for they had no previous knowledge of each other. Accordingly, John referred all his disciples to Jesus, thereby transferring to him, as far as it was in his power, all the popularity that he himself had acquired, which appears to have been very great with the nation in general. This, I would observe by the way, sufficiently proves that John was no impostor, or one who sought any thing for himself.

Jesus, thus announced, preached publicly, working numberless miracles, the reality of which was never called in question, especially healing all manner of diseases, and raising at least three persons, but probably more, from the dead. But the morality which he taught was so strict, and his appearance so unassuming, that the generality of his countrymen would not receive him in the character of their  
their

ir promised Messiah. Many, however, who ended him more closely, had no doubt of s. But even these persons were so fixed in popular belief that the Messiah was to be ing, that they were persuaded he only ted a proper opportunity to assume that racter; and when he was put to death hout doing it, all their hopes were disap- nted, and they evidently had no farther ectations from him, notwithstanding they er entertained the idea of his being an oistor.

While Jesus lived, his followers were nu- ous, and twelve of them constantly attend- him, so that his person could not but have n perfectly well known to them, and to se he repeatedly appeared after his death, is finally to leave no doubt on any of their ids, that he was the same person who had n put to death.

I shall now dwell a little on those circum- ces which tend to give peculiar strength he evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, l reply to some objections which have n made to it. After this I shall shew t this historical evidence of the truth of

*revealed*



*revealed religion* proves the truth of *natural religion*, and conclude with a practical application of the doctrine.

In the first place I shall consider the circumstances which give peculiar strength to the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus.

1. His death was not private, among his friends, but in public, and accomplished by his enemies, who, we may be sure, would not leave their own great purpose unfinished, when it was in their power completely to effect it. This we cannot doubt to have been the principal reason, in the plan of divine providence, why Jesus was executed as a criminal, in consequence of the sentence of a public court of justice. After this, no reasonable doubt could be entertained of the reality of his death. Accordingly, it does not appear that any doubt was entertained of it at the time, by those who were the best judges, and who were, at the same time, the most interested to dispute the fact. And this is all that we can reasonably require at this day.

It is true that Jesus expired sooner than other persons usually did in the same circumstances. But this might be owing to his  
having

having a more delicate constitution, but especially to his having been so much exhausted by his severe agony in the garden the preceding night; an agony which affected him so much that it would not have been extraordinary if he had actually died in consequence of it: since such consternation and terror as he appears to have been in is well known to have been, of itself, the cause of death to many persons.

The death of Jesus was so evident to the soldiers who attended the execution, and who, no doubt (being used to the business) were sufficient judges of the signs of death, that, concluding him to be actually dead, they did not break his bones, as they did those of the other persons who were executed along with him. One of them, however, did what was fully equivalent to it; for he thrust a spear into his side, so that blood and water evidently flowed out of the wound. Now though we may be at a loss to account for the *water*, it was certainly impossible so to pierce the body as that *blood* should visibly and instantly flow from the wound, without piercing either the heart itself; or some large blood vessel, the rupture of which would have been mortal.

After

After this, Jesus was taken down from the cross, was swathed in spices, as the bodies of persons of distinction among the Jews usually were, was left in that state, without any appearance of life, deposited in a cold sepulchre, where he could have no assistance to bring him to life if any remains of life had been in him. Can we then have any doubt of Jesus having been unquestionably dead, when both friends and enemies had no doubt at the time on the subject.

2. The circumstances of the re-appearing of Jesus after his crucifixion were such, as were calculated to give the greatest satisfaction possible. The first of them were made when, it is evident, his disciples had no expectation whatever of any such event, so that they could not have been imposed upon by their fond imaginations. For though Jesus had plainly apprized his disciples that he was to be put to death, and that he should rise again on the third day, they had so fixed a persuasion that he was to be a great king, and consequently not to die at all, that they probably concluded (as he had been used to speak to them in figurative language) that by *death* he only meant


meant some trial, or calamity, and that therefore by a *resurrection* he meant his emerging from it. But whatever their ideas were, it is most evident from the history that they had no expectation either of his death, or of his resurrection, and that his death only filled them with consternation and despair, and did not at all lead them to expect his resurrection.

After Jesus had appeared in this unexpected manner to several of his disciples, viz. Mary Magdalene, to the two disciples walking to Emmaus, to the ten who were assembled the evening of the same day at Jerusalem, and probably to Peter also, he appointed a time and place when he would meet them again, at a sufficient distance from the time of his speaking. Consequently, if any doubts remained on the minds of any of them, they had time to consider what satisfaction they required, and might, of course, be prepared to accept that satisfaction; which it is evident he never refused them, even offering himself to be handled, and examined by them at their leisure, and eating and drinking along with them. Indeed the marks of crucifixion on his

his hands and feet, and the wound in his side, were abundantly sufficient to identify his person. What is recorded concerning Thomas was probably the case of many others; nor did his incredulity exceed that of the rest, though he expressed it in a stronger manner; and the satisfaction that Jesus gave to Thomas, he was, no doubt, as ready to give to any others of them.

3. The appearances were sufficiently frequent, viz. four times on the day of resurrection, first to Mary Magdalene, then to Peter, then to the two disciples walking to Emmaus, then to the Ten in the absence of Thomas, and afterwards to all the Eleven. In Galilee he first appeared unexpectedly to Peter, John, and a few others, and then to more than five hundred at once. This must have been the great meeting by appointment, though particularly mentioned by Paul only. Another time he appeared to James, called his brother, or near relation, then to all the disciples (who were more than an hundred) residing at Jerusalem, when he went with them to the mount of Olives, and at leisure ascended above the clouds in their sight.

Though



Though these are all the appearances that are particularly recorded, there were probably many more, for no one writer has mentioned all these, not even Paul, who seems to have intended to recite all that he could recollect at that time. None of these appearances, I would also observe, were at midnight, when persons, suddenly awaking from sleep, have not the perfect use of their senses and judgment; but in the day; not at a distance, but quite near; and not transient, but of a sufficient length of time.

Surely, then, we are authorized to say that, as far as *numbers* were requisite to give evidence concerning any particular event, these were quite sufficient. For if the evidence of five hundred would not remove the doubts of any persons, neither would that of five thousand, or of any number whatever. They were also persons who had every character of unexceptionable witnesses, as they cannot be supposed to have been deceived themselves, or to have had any motive to wish to impose upon others; because they had no interest in doing it.

4. The appearances were continued to a sufficient period, viz. the space of forty days, which was certainly time enough for any persons to recollect themselves, to get over any impression of surprize, and to be perfectly collected, so as to be put upon their guard against any cause of deception, and to examine and satisfy themselves at their full leisure.

Such is the direct evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, than which nothing can well be conceived to be stronger, resting upon the testimony of a sufficient number of the most competent witnesses, not prepossessed in favour of an *expected* event, and who yet had time to recover from the surprize occasioned by an *unexpected* one. It was also a testimony to which they all adhered through life, notwithstanding the greatest temptation that men could lie under to tell a different story.

I shall now consider some objections that have been made to this evidence.

1. It has been said that Jesus ought to have continued longer in a state of death, as till the body had putrified, &c. so that the revival of it might have been the more extraordinary.

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In this view, no doubt, the evidence of a proper resurrection might have been made more striking. But then, though the evidence would have gained strength in one way, it would, by this very means, have lost much more in another. Not to say that a resurrection from any state of unquestionable death, is as much a proof of a real miracle, as from any other state. That is, it required nothing less than a *divine power*, which is undoubtedly equal to the raising a man from death at any period, as well as the making of any number of new men.

But had the resurrection of Jesus been at any considerable distance of time, the evidence of his *death*, and consequently that of a miracle in his *resurrection*, had not been so clear. For then it might have been said that, in so long time, he might have recovered from the effect of a seeming death; that his disciples had time to recover from their consternation, and lay their schemes for any particular purpose; that, in so long an interval, the guard of the sepulchre might have been more negligently kept, the seal on the stone might have been broken by some accident, and Jesus, being alive, might



have been conveyed away, and time given for his appearance, as raised from the dead.

But considering that Jesus was taken down from the cross, to all appearance at least dead, and left in the state of a corpse, swathed in spices, late on Friday evening, and then left alone, in a cold sepulchre, it was absolutely impossible, whatever life may be supposed to have remained in him, that he should have appeared not only alive, but in perfect health and vigour, walking about, and conversing, as if nothing at all had been done to him, so early as at day break on the Sunday following. In the evening of that day he walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus, which was about eight miles, and also back again, and as speedily as two men in health, and who made all the haste they could, were able to do the same. This is the more extraordinary, considering the wounds that had been made in the *feet* of Jesus. If a man had suffered nothing more than this piercing of his feet, in the rough manner in which it was, no doubt, done in the act of crucifixion, this walk alone would have been absolutely impossible; and on the third day he would have been even less able to walk


walk than on the first, from the inflammation of the wounds. There must, therefore, have been some miracle in the case; and if any miracle was performed, why not that of a real resurrection?

It may be said that the evidence of a real miracle would have been still stronger, if the bones of Jesus had been broken, like those of the two thieves. But as the piercing of his feet, the wound in his side, and even the hanging so long on the cross, must have effectually incapacitated him from walking abroad within two days, the breaking of his bones would have made no real addition to the evidence; the *impossibility* of his walking abroad being really the same in both cases. There would have been a difference only in the case of *probabilities*, which vary with circumstances. But any one natural and absolute *impossibility* furnishes as strong an argument as another.

In this very important view, therefore, the less was the time that intervened between Jesus' having been laid in the sepulchre, and his appearance alive and well out of it, the stronger is the evidence of a divine interposition, and unbelievers would have had more to

object if that interval had been longer, than they can have at present. Jesus, we can now say, appeared alive and well sooner than it was *possible*, in the ordinary course of nature, that he could have done. It was before the guard could have been relaxed, before the disciples could have recovered from their consternation; and especially before it was possible for him to have recovered from the languishing state in which crucifixion must have left any man; to say nothing of the wound he had received in his side, which alone, if it had missed any vital part, must have confined him, and have disabled him from going abroad, a very long time.

2. It may be proper to take some notice of the story that was propagated by the Jewish priests, who, when the guard fled at the appearance of the angel and the earthquake, bade them say that *the disciples of Jesus came by night, and stole him away while they slept*. This, however, was both in the highest degree improbable, and what is more, it would not have answered any purpose; so that they who had just before behaved in the most cowardly manner possible, must have risked their lives  
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for nothing. Indeed, such a story as this would hardly have been suggested by the enemies of christianity, if any thing had been known at the time besides the earthquake, the appearance of the angel, and a suspicion, perhaps a report, of the absence of the body, and if any thing had occurred to them more plausible at the time. So weak a defence almost amounts to a confession of the weakness of the cause to be supported by it.

The improbability alone of any considerable number of men all sleeping, whose business it was to keep awake, and not more than two or three hours, for which they had time enough to prepare themselves by sleeping the preceding part of the night (for this was the last watch, at break of day) and when the penalty of sleeping was death; and that they should all sleep so soundly, as that the rolling of a large stone (so large that several women despaired of being able to move it) and this quite near to them, should not awake any one of them, is far too great to be admitted.

The disciples of Jesus, if such a scheme had come into their minds, dispirited and dispersed as they were, could have had no expectation

pectation of accomplishing of it *undiscovered*, even if there had been no guard at the sepulchre. The city of Jerusalem was at that time full of people, beyond any thing that we can have an idea of at present, being the time of passover, and when the moon was at the full, so that numbers of people (the houses of the city not being sufficient to receive them) would be walking about at all hours ; and the sepulchre was so near to the city, that it is now inclosed within the walls. In that climate, and that time of the year, there was no inconvenience in passing the whole night, and even sleeping in the open air. The preceding night Jesus and his disciples had passed in a neighbouring garden ; and it is very probable that they had done the same before, since Judas expected to find them there. In these circumstances, the disciples could not have had any reasonable expectation of removing the body undiscovered. ✕

Besides, what would the removal of a mere corpse, admitting that they might have had the courage, and address, to succeed in so unpromising an attempt, have availed them. There would have been no evidence of a re-

✕ *particularly, as it was moon-light.* <sup>resurrection,</sup>

*urrection*, unless the dead man could have been exhibited alive, which it was certainly out of their power to do.

If a few of the disciples of Jesus had been so abandoned, and at the same time so stupid, as to have attempted an imposition of this kind, an imposition from which they could not have derived any imaginable advantage, how could they have made others believe a resurrection of which they saw no evidence? Would the mere absence of the body have satisfied Thomas (who, though one of the twelve, was certainly not in the secret) the five hundred who went by appointment into Galilee, or the thousands who were converted by Peter immediately after this event; and would none of them have abandoned so groundless a faith in time of persecution? Would not torture, and the prospect of death, have extorted a confession of the cheat from some of those who were in the secret.

Lastly, what prospect could the disciples of Jesus have had of being able to carry on the scheme that was begun by their master, without his power of working miracles, of which they must have known themselves to be destitute. It was, no doubt, the possession  
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of this power, and this alone, that emboldened them, disappointed and dispirited as they had been before, to persist in the same scheme, and without this they would certainly have absconded, and have been no more heard of. They were neither orators, nor warriors, and therefore were destitute of all the natural means of success.

3. The objection that has been urged in the strongest manner, and to which I must, therefore, give the more particular attention, is, that, after his resurrection, Jesus should have appeared as publicly as he had done before his death, and especially in the presence of his judges, and of his enemies. This, they say, would have satisfied them, and the whole country, and of course all the world, so that no doubt would have remained on the subject.

But the resurrection of Jesus himself might not have conciliated those who were only the more exasperated at the resurrection of Lazarus, at which themselves were present, from whatever source their obstinacy and incredulity arose. The whole story, how well soever attested, might have been laughed at in Greece and at Rome, where the Jews and every thing relating to them, were, without  
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any examination into the subject, held in the greatest contempt. Besides, there would have been a want of dignity, and an appearance of insult, unworthy of our Saviour's character, in thus ostentatiously exhibiting himself before his enemies, and as it were mocking at their attempts to kill him.

I would farther observe, that though Jesus did not appear to *all* his enemies, he did appear to *one* of them, and one whom no person will doubt to have been as prejudiced, and as inveterate, as any of them, viz. Paul. Now, as *this* enemy of christianity was convinced of the truth of the resurrection, by Jesus appearing to him in person, we cannot doubt but that, if it had suited the plan of divine providence, *all* the Jews might have been convinced by the same means, and have become christians.

But admitting that the consequence of such a public appearance of Jesus would have been the conviction of all that country, and of all that age, it would have been an unfavourable circumstance with respect to the evidence at *this* distance of time, and still more so in remoter ages. And the great object certainly  
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was, that this important event should be so circumstanced, as that it should preserve its credit unimpaired to the end of time.

If we suppose that mankind in the most distant ages of the world had been asked, What kind of evidence would satisfy *them*, with respect to the reality of an event which took place several thousand years before they were born, they would certainly say; that, to give satisfaction to *them* who had no opportunity of examining into the fact themselves, it should have been so circumstanced, as that besides a sufficient number of persons attesting the truth of it, friends and enemies, believers and unbelievers, should clearly appear to have been sufficiently *interested* to examine into the truth, while the fact was *recent*, and therefore while it was in their power to investigate it thoroughly. And this could only be in circumstances in which some should believe it and others not, and in which the believers should have every temptation to renounce their belief, and their enemies every motive to detect the imposture. But this could not have been the case if the resurrection of Jesus had been universally believed.

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at the time, or in that age, and consequently there had been no early persecution of christians.

In these circumstances, it might have been said by unbelievers in remote ages, that, as no opposition was made to the progress of christianity, it did not appear to them that the reality of those facts on which the belief of it is founded had been sufficiently enquired into at the time, that it might have been found convenient (for reasons now unknown, and at this distance inscrutable) to make a change in the religion of the country; and that, as the rulers of it adopted the measure, it might, for any thing that appeared, have been originally a scheme of *theirs*; and that when the governors of any country interest themselves to promote any measure, it is always in their power to impose upon the vulgar; that private orders, for example, might have been given, that Jesus, though suspended on a cross, should not be much hurt; that the sepulchre, being under ground, might have proper apartments adjoining to it, where there might be every accommodation that was requisite for his complete recovery and refresh-

ment; and that a few leading persons being in the secret, the rest might be imposed upon to believe the story of a resurrection, or any thing else.

Thus the origin of christianity, it might have been said, did not materially differ from that of the several species of heathenism or Mahometanism, which the people first believed without any proper enquiry, and to which their descendants adhered because they had been received by their ancestors before them.

But the circumstances attending the actual promulgation of christianity were such, as that nothing of this kind can ever be advanced by any unbelievers, at all acquainted with the history of the times; because it is evident, that Jesus Christ, and his religion, and especially the account of his resurrection, on which the whole of it hinged, immediately engaged the closest attention of great numbers, and that thousands felt themselves interested in the highest degree to examine into the truth of it.

In the first place, the apostles, and other primitive christians, were certainly interested  
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not to give up their ease, their little fortunes, and their lives, for an idle tale. And, on the other hand, the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, who had been so much exasperated at Jesus as to procure his death, even with some risque to themselves, from his popularity with the common people, would feel themselves more strongly interested to suppress his followers, and his religion, after his death, and this they evidently did, without losing any time in the business.

Not more than fifty days elapsed between the crucifixion of Jesus and the most open publication of the account of his resurrection, an event spoken of even before his death, against any imposition with respect to which all possible precautions had been taken, and concerning which many rumours must have prevailed from the passover to pentecost (for no secrecy was enjoined with respect to it) from the very day of his appearance. On the day of Pentecost, however, it was boldly asserted by such a number of persons, who were witnesses of the fact, that some thousands (who had themselves seen the miracles of Jesus) were fully convinced of its truth,  
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and gave public testimony of their faith by being immediately baptized.

Observe in how full and explicit a manner Peter, on this occasion, gave his testimony, Acts ii. 22. *Ye men of Israel, bear my words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all (and about one hundred and twenty were then with him) are witnesses.*

The boldness of the apostles in giving this public testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, a testimony which his audience evidently could not contradict, exasperated the rulers of the country to the highest degree; and the event being then recent, they would, no doubt, do every thing that men, and men in power, could do in order to discover the cheat, if any such had been used.

This endeavour to suppress christianity began in the very country, and in the very city, in which it was first promulgated, where Jesus had always appeared in public, and consequently

consequently where himself, and all that he had done, were known to thousands. And this violent opposition, than which we know of nothing in the history of mankind more violent, and which began as early as it was possible for it to begin, was continued by the Jews, with very few interruptions, till it was taken up by the Romans, who were alarmed at the rapid spread of the new religion, which soon appeared to be hostile to all the old ones, on the observance of which it was universally imagined that the temporal prosperity of states depended. And this persecution of christianity did not end till about three hundred years after its promulgation, that is, till all farther scrutiny into the facts was equally impossible and needless.

Did not this situation of things most strongly invite all persons to make the most rigorous inquiry into the truth of the facts on which christianity was founded, and especially that of the resurrection of Jesus? Would not all the five hundred as long as they lived (and according to Paul many of them were living in the year 52, and the apostle John, it is supposed, did not die till about A. D. 90)

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be continually speaking of it, and examined concerning it. This would certainly be the case if any such event had happened at this day, and human nature, we cannot doubt to have been the same in all ages.

What, then, could any of those who are now unbelievers in christianity have done, if they had been living at the time of the promulgation of it, more than other unbelievers then did, who, whatever else they might do, or say, could not discover any marks of imposture. No other facts in the whole compass of history, we may safely venture to assert, ever underwent a thousandth part of the investigation that, from the nature of the circumstances, *these* must have done; and, what is of particular consequence, at the time when the investigation was the most easy.

Though Jesus did not appear in public after his resurrection, the miracle of *the descent of the holy Spirit*, enabling the apostles and other disciples to speak intelligibly languages which they had not been taught, and also many other miracles wrought by them, were as public as possible; and every miracle wrought by the apostles was, in fact, a proof of the resurrection

rection of their master. If his mission, confirmed by, and implying the truth of, his resurrection, was not from God, neither was theirs; for both were part of the same scheme, and therefore they imply one another."

Thus our faith does not rest on the testimony of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who wrote the history of Christ, and of the promulgation of christianity. We have, in fact, the testimony of the age in which they lived, to the great events recorded by them. These books, or ever so many of the same nature, could never have been received, and transmitted to us, as authentic histories, in the circumstances that I have described, if the contents of them could have been questioned.

The inconsistencies that we discover in the accounts of the four evangelists imply no defect in the evidence; being no greater than we usually find in the narratives of any important event written by different persons; who will always attend chiefly to what is most essential to the story, and less to the minute circumstances of it; and these narratives were all written a considerable time after the event.



But the most important consideration is, that these histories were not the cause of the belief of the resurrection of Jesus, but were themselves among the consequences of that belief, the proper evidence having produced its full effect long before they were written; so that it could not have been deficient in any material respect.

That all mankind were not immediately convinced of the truth of christianity may be sufficiently accounted for; as, from the little interest that great numbers take in any thing relating to *religion*; from the aversion which the greatest part of mankind have to examine into any thing that is *new*, when it is hostile to that which is *old*, and their listening to any idle tales to the prejudice of those who teach it, which we see every day. And if the powerful, the learned, and the polite, whose prejudices, especially against any thing that originates with the *illiterate*, are well known to be as strong as any prejudices whatever, would not read or think seriously on the subject (which was evidently the case with the generality of the Greek and Roman philosophers, and other persons of distinction at that time) many  
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would be influenced by their example, and join in a blind opposition to what they had never considered, from imagining that it was not worth their while to consider it.

Besides all this, we are to consider the great numbers who were, directly or indirectly, interested in the support of the old established systems of religion, who would feel themselves exasperated, and, therefore without any inquiry into the merits of the case, would, with all their might, oppose the progress of the new religion. Such would be the case with many persons of eminence and influence; and the lower orders, the mob, might be inflamed by any idle tales. This is nothing more than the common fate of all reformers, and all reformations in matters of religion. It flows from the common principles of human nature, which are the same in all ages, and which operate in the same manner in all similar circumstances.

In this state things continued as long as they possibly could, the friends and the enemies of christianity being equally interested to discover the truth, while the facts were at all recent, and most easy to be investigated;

and the new religion established itself gradually, as, if founded on truth, and unaided by power, it naturally would do in such circumstances. The attention of the more dispassionate and disinterested was gradually gained, and converts were in time made of some men of learning, who were capable of writing in defence of christianity, and whose writings made other converts, both philosophers and others.

At length the converts to christianity in all places, and especially in those that were the nearest to the scene of the transactions, were so numerous, that the old religion sunk into general contempt and neglect; and in less than three hundred years after the promulgation of christianity, we see that, notwithstanding the deep-rooted attachment of all the heathen world to the religion of their ancestors, Constantine could safely declare himself a christian, without any apprehension from his competitors, who endeavoured to avail themselves of that circumstance. None of them, however, were able, by this means, to throw any considerable obstacle in his way, and he reigned almost in peace, and a longer

longer time than any of the emperors after Augustus.

This is a clear proof of the preceding spread of christianity, and of the hold which it had got on the minds of the people in general; and this was in the most disadvantageous circumstances that can be imagined, if it had been an imposture. But this most striking evidence of the truth of christianity we could not now have had, if the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus had been such, as to have convinced all the Jews and all the world as soon as he appeared. What had been the most satisfactory to *them* would have been (from the nature of the thing) the least so to *us*.

When the persecution of christianity began, the facts on which it was founded were recent, so that it was in the power of men of sense and inquiry to satisfy themselves concerning them; and we have seen that they were sufficiently interested so to do. But if one whole generation should have been, as we say, *infatuated*, so as to have taken up the belief of these facts without any sufficient reason, the next generation might have been

sensible of this, and have made more diligent search (and then it was not too late) and not have thrown away their fortunes and their lives for nothing, as their fathers had done before them. But notwithstanding this, every inquiry continued to make more converts, till, without any aid from power, or from learning in the first instance, the new religion completely established itself on the ruins of the old, and was embraced by persons of all ranks without distinction, the rich and the poor, the philosophers and the vulgar.

If all this could take place without there being any truth in the history of the miracles, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus, it must have been more extraordinary, nay, strictly speaking, more miraculous, than those events themselves. For human nature was the same then that it is now; and that *men*, such as we now find them to be, should, in the circumstances that I have now described, have been impressed as the early converts to christianity were, that they should have been induced to believe a story which they might easily have discovered to be destitute of all foundation, and have sacrificed so much as they did

did to their belief, must have been the greatest of all miracles; no natural cause being adequate to such an effect. It must also have been so stupendous a miracle (operating on *the minds of men*, which is more extraordinary than any effect that is apparent to the senses) without any rational end or object. Nay the Divine Being must have wrought this miracle with no other view than to puzzle and confound his creatures, and to involve some of the most deserving of them in the greatest calamities. On the other hand, the miracles which gave birth to christianity had the greatest and noblest of all objects, the instruction and reformation of the world. In fact, the proof of christianity supplies the only probable method of accounting for past and present *appearances*, and therefore what a true *philosopher*, whose object it is to inquire into the *causes of things*, will adopt, in preference to any other.

It was, however, you clearly see, of the greatest advantage to the evidence of the truth of christianity in distant ages, that the bulk of the Jewish nation should from the beginning have been hostile to it; while at  
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the same time the belief of such numbers of them, prejudiced as they must all have been against it, is an abundant proof of its truth. But when, by the long continued enmity of the Jews to the christians, it shall be sufficiently evident, that it was no scheme of that nation in general, and that, so far from giving it any aid in its infant state, they discountenanced it as much as it was in their power to do it; if ever they should be converted to christianity, before or after their return to their own country (both which events are foretold in the scriptures) it will be such a clear fulfilment of prophecy, as it seems probable that no power of incredulity will be able to resist; and then, as Paul says, Rom. xi. 15. *If the casting away of the Jews be the reconciling of the world, what shall receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*

I shall conclude this part of my discourse with observing, that the truth of christianity is founded upon plain *facts*, such as any persons who had the use of their senses might be judges of. Opinions of other kinds men may become so fully persuaded of, as even to die for them, as well as christians have done  
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for their religion; but then the *nature* and *ground* of their faith have been different; they having been either misled by an *implicit faith* in persons who they thought could not mislead them, or by *reasoning wrong*. That Mahomet, for example, or Swedenborg, had divine missions, many might be induced to believe on their own confident assertions, having a good opinion of the men; or they might imagine that the conquests of Mahomet and his followers, could not have been so great and so rapid, if his pretensions had not been well founded. But is this such *kind* of evidence as that on which we believe the truth of christianity, which neither requires that implicit faith be given to any person, nor any reasoning, except the plainest of all, viz. that if any person do such works as God only could enable him to do, he must be empowered by God to do them, and the evidence of their own senses that such works were done? The truth of christianity rests on the evidence of such visible marks of divine power as the instant curing of the most dangerous disorders, and the raising of persons, and especially of Jesus himself, from a state of actual



actual death, with respect to which men who had only eyes, ears, and other natural senses, could not possibly be deceived; whereas no visible miracle of any kind was so much as pretended to by either Mahomet or Swedenborg.

We also see the great difference of the ground of belief in these cases in the *time* that was requisite to produce their effect. Mahomet was several years in persuading any besides a very few persons, particularly connected with him, and who had a prospect of being gainers by his success, of his divine mission, and it was thirteen years before he had followers enow to venture to take the field with them, so as to attack a caravan, to which they were led by the hope of plunder. As to Swedenborg, though he died several years ago, his followers are only just now beginning to make themselves conspicuous. On the contrary, it is evident that Jesus might, if he had been so disposed, have mustered as large an army as he chose within a month or two after he appeared in a public character.

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Some are so incredulous as to say, that, admitting all the facts recited in the gospel history, viz. that the apostles, and other disciples of Jesus, had no doubt of his resurrection; and that their previous incredulity was overcome by the most satisfactory evidence; yet that it was more probable that their senses, that of feeling, as well as those of seeing and hearing, were repeatedly imposed upon, than that there should have been a proper resurrection of a man who had been dead. But such a deception as this could not have been effected without a miracle; and for what end could such a miracle have been wrought? As it had all the effect of a real resurrection, it is liable to all the same objections, and therefore if the one was produced, the other might be also.

If any person will say either that the appearances recorded in the New Testament are no proofs of a real resurrection, or (which has also been said) that the real resurrection of Jesus would be no proof of his divine mission, and of the truth of his religion, so that we could not thence infer the certainty of our own resurrection, they must be so constituted,

stituted, as that no evidence whatever <sup>can</sup> any produce that conviction in their minds. The Divine Being himself (and I must in this argument suppose that there is such a Being) could not do it. For all that *he* could do to attest the divine mission of any person could only be his enabling him to work miracles, or to do such things as only he himself, the author of nature, could do. But no person, in the age of the apostles, or any subsequent one, ever believed the facts, and doubted the conclusion; so that the miracles were fully adequate to the purpose of them; and since all men are no doubt constituted alike, the present objectors must be under the influence of a prejudice that nothing can overcome, and must be a case exactly similar to insanity;

I now proceed to shew that the solution of such difficulties as these, respecting the truth of *revealed religion*, may assist those who have similar difficulties with respect to *natural religion*; and all great moral truths have, directly or indirectly, a connection with each other.

Now it seems to be impossible for any person to be convinced by historical evidence, which

which is the most intelligible of all evidence whatever, of the miracles, the death, and resurrection of Christ, and at the same time to have any doubt of the being and the providence of God, because the one evidently implies the other. If Christ actually wrought miracles, and, after dying, rose from the dead, there must have been a *power* that enabled him so to do; and this must have been an intelligent, or a designing, and a benevolent power, the laws of nature having been changed for great and good purposes.

It is in vain for any person to say, as some however have done, that till we are satisfied with respect to the being of a God, which, in the order of nature, is the first of all religious truths, it is to no purpose to inquire into the evidence of christianity. For though it be most convenient to *teach*, and to *consider*, any system of truths in a certain order, the *discovery* of them is altogether independent of that order. In this case, *the first may be last, and the last first.*

An Englishman, for example, may say, and plausibly enough, that he ought to understand his own country, before he explores

plores any other. But it may happen that he shall be carried to Asia, Africa, or America, before he can have seen much of his own country, and thereby have a better opportunity of exploring *them* than his own. Or, considering the sun as the centre of our system, he might fancy that, till we know what that great body is, it is absurd to give much attention to the *planets*, which depend upon it. But in this way he might live and die without acquiring any knowledge of them at all. Even the several propositions in geometry may be learned in a very different order, as the different treatises on that branch of science evince, and yet be all equally well understood at the last. In like manner may men attain to the knowledge of God, and of his providence without beginning with the study of them.

An atheist is a person who believes that there is no Being who established the present order of nature, but that all things have always been as they now are, and that all deviations from this order are absolutely impossible, and therefore incredible. Consequently, any clear proof of an actual deviation

viation from this order of nature overturns his whole system. The atheist says that, since we must suppose something to have been *uncaused*, we may just as well content ourselves with saying that the present visible system had no cause, as suppose that something still greater than this system, and the cause of it, had no cause; since by ascending higher, we get no nearer to the solution of our great difficulty, viz. the *cause of what exists*. But the proof of any miracle is decisively in favour of the actual existence of a power unquestionably above the common course of nature, and different from it. This is no less than a demonstration, that the reasoning of the atheist, however specious, is *in fact* wrong; and that, difficult as it may be to conceive the self-existence, as we say, of a Being greater than the visible universe, such a Being certainly does exist. I shall endeavour to make this argument still plainer by an illustration.

Let a person unacquainted with clocks, watches, and other machines, be introduced into a room containing many of them, all in regular motion. He sees no maker of these machines, and knows nothing of their internal

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structure; and as he sees them all to move with perfect regularity, he may say, on the principles of the atheistical system, that they are *automata*, or self-moving machines; and so long as all these machines continue in regular motion, and he knows nothing of the making of them, or the winding of them up, this theory may appear plausible.

But let us suppose that, coming into this room again and again, and, always attending to the machines, he shall find one of them much out of order, and at length its motion shall intirely cease; but that, after continuing in this state some time, he shall again find it in perfect order, moving as regularly as ever. Will he not then conclude that some person, whom he has not seen, but probably the maker of the machines, had been in the room in his absence? The restoration of motion to the disordered machine would impress his mind with the idea of a *maker* of them in a much more forcible manner than his observing the regular construction, and uniform motion of them. It must convince him of the existence of some person capable of *regulating*, and therefore probably of *making*, these

these machines, whether he should ever see this person or not.

Thus do miracles prove the existence of a God in a shorter and more satisfactory manner than the observation of the uninterrupted course of nature. If there be a Being who can *controul* the course of nature, there must be one who originally *establisbed* it, in whatever difficulty we may still be left with respect to his nature, and the manner of his existence. We are compelled by a greater difficulty to admit a less, though acknowledged to be great. At all events, we see in miracles that there certainly exists a Being superior to ourselves, or any thing that is the object of our senses.

And thus is demonstrated the wisdom of the general plan of divine providence, in ordering that the laws of nature should not always proceed without interruption, but in providing that the attention of mankind should sometimes be arrested by miraculous events; since they are eminently calculated to lead the minds of men to the consideration of a superior Being, as the cause of all events, ordinary and extraordinary. Thus also is



evident the folly and ignorance of those who think all miraculous events to be so absurd, as to be in their own nature incredible, and therefore that no evidence in their favour can deserve the least attention. If the reverence of mankind for their maker be of any use, or of any consequence to their happiness, which undoubtedly it is, occasional miracles have the greatest propriety, and therefore great antecedent credibility, though all the particular facts require very circumstantial evidence, because they are not of frequent occurrence.

I now come to draw some practical inferences from the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus.


Such is the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, exclusive of the general evidence of christianity, or of the miracles of Jesus, and those of the apostles after him, which are also another confirmation of the truth of this one great event. And, surely, it appears that the circumstances attending the resurrection of Jesus were so ordered by divine providence, that it is not in the power of man to imagine any change in them that, according to the known laws of evidence, would make it more credible than

than it is with respect to distant ages. Every objection that has hitherto been made to this evidence has led to a more rigorous examination of the circumstances; and the consequence of this has always been an addition of light upon the evidence, and a greater confirmation of it. We are therefore abundantly authorized to consider our faith as *founded upon a rock*, which no future objection will be able to shake.

Since, therefore, we may consider it as a certain and unquestionable fact, that *Christ is risen from the dead*, we may likewise, with the apostle, consider him as *the first fruits of them that sleep*, or that his resurrection is a pledge and assurance of our own, which it is the great object of christianity to enforce. Christ is called the *first fruits*, and these are the fore-runners of a general harvest. *Afterwards*, says the apostle, *they that are Christ's, at his coming*. For Christ has only left the present scene for a time. If there be any truth in the facts the evidence of which has now been laid before you, he will certainly come again, and that *with power and great glory*, to raise the dead, and to give unto every man according

Let us, therefore, my christian brethren, be continually looking for this great event, this *great day of God*, as it is sometimes called. For to all of us it is *nigh, even at the doors*. Long as the sleep of death may really be, it will appear to each of us to be only a moment. In death we, as it were, only shut our eyes upon this world, and immediately open them in another, with the brightest and most glorious prospects, if our conversation has been such as becomes the gospel, but with the most gloomy and dreadful ones, if this great light *bath come into the world, and we have loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil*.

The mere profession of christianity will avail us nothing, nay much less than nothing, because it lays us under stronger obligations to a virtuous life, and therefore will aggravate our condemnation if we do not live as, by ranking with christians, we profess to live. Better, far better, would it be for us, at the day of judgment, to be able to say we had never heard of Christ, than *naming the name of Christ*, or professing his religion, not to have been thereby led to *depart from iniquity*, and to be to him *a peculiar people zealous of good works*.



Christianity is much less to be considered as a system of doctrines, than as a rule of practice. Nay the doctrines themselves (the chief of which is that of a future state of retribution) have no other object than the regulation of our lives. What the great duties of the christian life are, we are all sufficiently acquainted with. They are comprehended in two great precepts, the first of which is the love of God with all our hearts, implying an entire and chearful devotedness to his will, in doing and in suffering, in life and in death. And the second is the loving of our neighbour as ourselves, implying a readiness, in all cases, to do to others as we should think it right that they should do to us. We should all habitually consider one another as brethren, the children of the same great universal parent, the care of the same benevolent providence, as training up in the same school of moral discipline here, and as heirs together of the same glorious hope of eternal life hereafter.

To fit us for these devotional and social duties, we should also be careful to exercise a constant government over our appetites and

passions, that, as the apostle says, we may preserve ourselves as the *unpolluted temples of the spirit of God*.

. Thus, my christian brethren, *knowing our duty, happy shall we be if we do it*; that when our Lord, after his long absence, shall return, to take an account of his servants, when our eyes, and when every eye, shall see him, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming; but having duly improved the talents committed to each of us, may hear from his mouth the joyful sentence, *Well done good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord*.

THE END.

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# S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

GRAVEL PIT MEETING,  
IN HACKNEY,

APRIL 19TH, 1793,

*Being the day appointed for a General Fast.*

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By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.

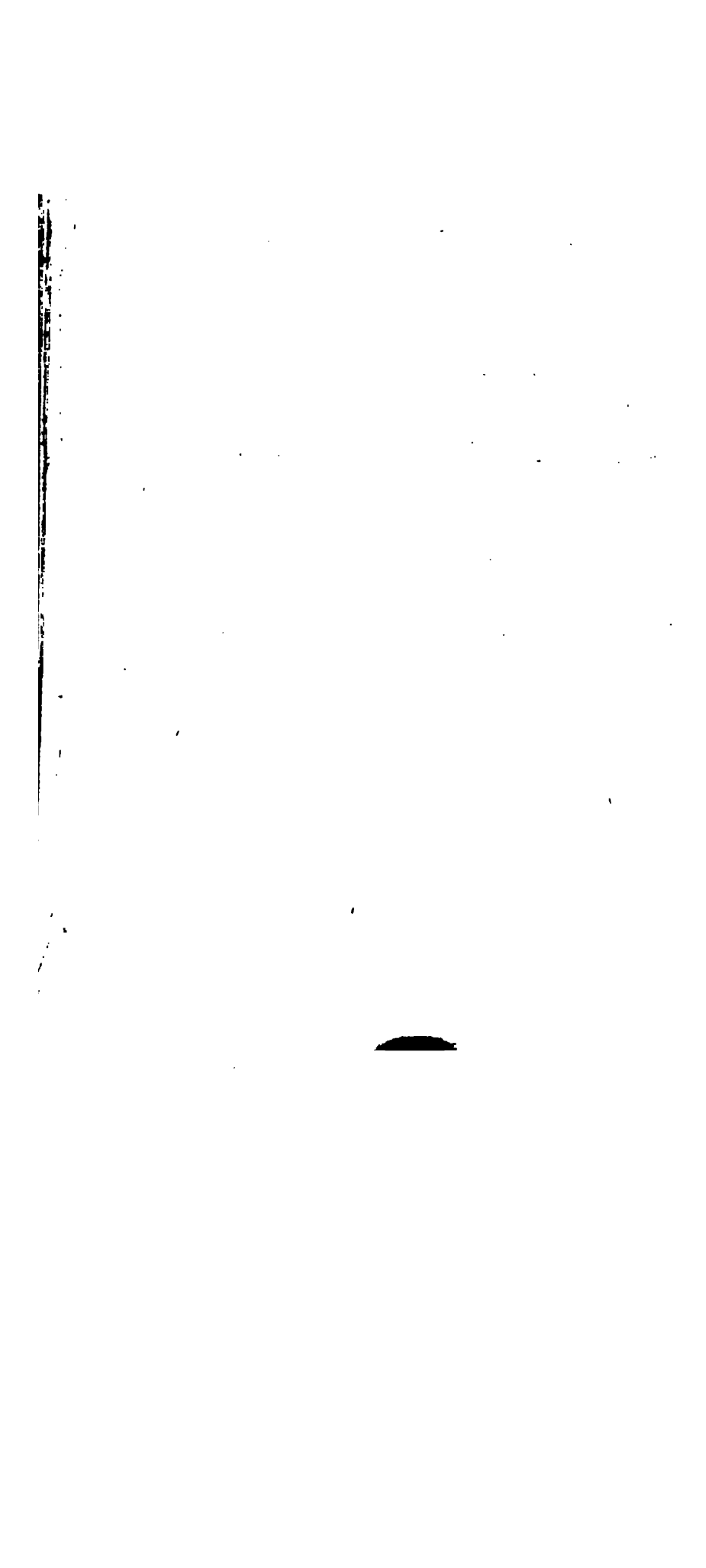
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L O N D O N:

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1793.



## THE PREFACE.

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**T**HE observing of days appointed by civil governors for the purpose of religious acts, as of public humiliation or thanksgiving, being objected to by many of my brethren, I wish to inform them, in this Preface, of the light in which I consider it, as a vindication of my own practice.

Since societies of men are as dependant on the Supreme Being as individuals, *public* worship is as proper in itself as *private*, and if a whole nation could be assembled in one place, and a person could be heard as speaking for them all, this would be as proper as the worship of a single parish. But what cannot be done in one assembly may be done in many, and if any one time (which is on several accounts most proper) be fixed upon for any act of national worship, it must be done by persons invested with civil authority. With us it is done by the King's proclamation, but as this has not, in this country, the force of law, it can only be considered as an advice, or re-

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quisition,



quisition, not enforced by any civil penalty ; and both the Quakers and many Dissenters are well known to disobey this requisition with impunity.

But it is said we are called upon to do a thing that we disapprove. Many persons think the war, in which we are engaged, to be *unjust*, and yet we are called upon to pray for success in it, as a *just* and *necessary* war. Still, however, if we think the situation of the country to be such as to give propriety to an act of public humiliation and prayer, we may obey the civil magistrate in assembling on the day that he shall appoint, but use our own judgment with respect to the manner in which the service shall be conducted ; and we all know that, think and act as we please, the Almighty will be directed by his own wisdom, and not by ours.

Let us suppose a number of persons on board a ship, so long becalmed as to be in danger of perishing for want of provisions, and the captain to order, or advise, them to pray, either by themselves, or in parties, as they shall think proper ; and, conceiving that a wind from the east would soonest bring them to a safe harbour, should farther direct them

# PREFACE.



to pray for *it*, while several of the crew should be of opinion, that a wind from the west would serve them better; might they not all go to their devotions at the same time, though, following their own best judgments, they should pray for whatever wind they thought proper, or with true piety pray for relief in general, or, with more piety still, content themselves with expressing their entire resignation to the will of God, whether he should think proper to relieve them or not?

On this principle, my predecessor Dr. Price, as well as myself, and many other Dissenters, always observed the days appointed for public fasts in the course of the American war, though we by no means adopted the language of the prayers published by authority for the use of the clergy on those occasions.

It cannot be supposed that, in a whole nation, consisting of several millions of persons, there should be only one opinion with respect to all, or almost any, measures of administration. It may be taken for granted, that if they think at all, they will think differently; and consequently, if they be honest men, they will be disposed to act differently, except that, in cases of a merely *civil* nature, they will

think it right to acquiesce in the decision of the majority, whatever it be. For without this the society must be dissolved.

I will take this opportunity, however, of observing, that as it is right in the minority to submit to the decision of the majority, it will be wise in the majority to bear with any mere difference of opinion in the minority, and to throw no impediment in the way of the freest discussion of their differences. For this is the only method of detecting error, speculative or practical, and of improving the condition of man ; and no institution of man can be absolutely perfect.

Every attempt to suppress opinion by force, is such a confession of the weakness of any cause, and of an utter inability to maintain it by reason and argument, that there is no instance in history in which it has answered, or in which it has not operated to overturn what it was intended to establish. What did an *Index Expurgatorius*, copious as it was, do for the Church of Rome? On this account I am concerned to see, what looks like the commencement of an *Index Expurgatorius* for the constitution of England.

In cases in which the commands of man are

appre-

apprehended to interfere with the commands of God, there can be no hesitation which we ought to prefer; and therefore a wise nation will carefully avoid all unnecessary interference of civil government with matters of religion. For as men who think at all, will think differently, to enforce obedience to any commands, which some persons may apprehend to be contrary to the laws of God, and the dictates of conscience, may be to alienate the affections of the most valuable members of the community, and lead to their banishment and extirpation, which cannot be for the advantage of any state.

This is my apology for the freedom with which I have, upon all occasions, advanced such opinions, as have appeared to me to be true and important, though contrary to those which have the countenance of the state, and also against all connexion between religion and civil government; and a good opportunity of repeating my testimony against this abuse of religion having occurred in this discourse, I have not declined availing myself of it.

In no other respects will it be pretended, that I have, on this occasion, obtruded my opinion with respect to any political subject.

If persons of all parties would cultivate that spirit of piety, which it has been my endeavour to inculcate in this discourse, it would tend to lessen their animosity against each other, and would either unite them in the same views of things, or remove every real inconvenience from the circumstance of their differing.

I have not, I own, concurred with the views of the governing powers of this nation, in praying for the success of our arms in this war, any more than I did in that with America; because I do not think that such success would be of any advantage to this country, and in this I am by no means singular. But I sincerely pray that the war may terminate in the firmer establishment of the liberties and happiness of this country, and of every other country in Europe; and whether it be victory or defeat, that will most conduce to this end, I sincerely wish and pray for it.

I have not scrupled to intimate my apprehensions, that the present war, whatever be its progress or termination, will only be the beginning of troubles in Europe; and in this, I own, I have greater apprehensions from the success, than from the defeat, of the present  
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PREFACE.

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combination against France. But I do not pretend to prophecy, and I sincerely pray that the evils which I fear are approaching, may be deferred as long as possible, and that the wisdom and moderation of our councils may contribute to so good an end. Let this country treat me as it will, I shall always remember with satisfaction the happiness I have enjoyed in it, as more than a balance for the injuries I have received from it. I am conscious that I have always meant to act the part of a good citizen, whether my services have been acceptable or not, and however I may be disposed of, I shall always be a sincere friend and well-wisher to my native country.

Mr. Burke has said in the House of Commons, that I have “declared hostility to the constitution of this country.” But after being publicly and repeatedly called upon to produce any authority for his assertion, it now sufficiently appears, that he has neither ability to maintain his charge, nor virtue to retract it. If I be an enemy to this country, I was so during more than twenty years of my acquaintance with him. For the freest of my writings, in which I declared myself  
most

most hostile to the civil establishment of christianity, as a part of the constitution of this country, was published before I knew him ; and of this he never in all that time intimated the least disapprobation. If there be men who are really dangerous in any country, they are such calumniators as he ; and if any mischief is to be apprehended to this country from political writings, it has been wholly occasioned by his own.

With some whose apprehensions are greater than their wisdom, every person who proposes any reformation in the constitution, is an enemy to it, and to wish for a change in the constitution, is to be an enemy to the country. But surely a man may be a friend both to his country and the constitution of it, without thinking either of them to be the best possible, or the best in the world. All that reason requires is, that a man conform to the laws, and support the government of his country when called upon to do it ; and this I should be ready to do if I lived in Turkey, and had been protected by the government of it ; protection and support being reciprocal duties.

Even in this most arbitrary government, I  
should

should not suppose that it would be deemed treasonable, or seditious, to maintain in argument, that there might be, or that there actually were, better forms of government than theirs. The expectations of some persons with respect to the government of this country, by *King, Lords, and Commons*, are as ridiculous as the conduct of the knights errant in the days of chivalry, so much regretted by Mr. Burke, in which they thought themselves obliged to maintain, that all the ladies to whose service they had devoted themselves, were, without exception, the most beautiful and accomplished of women.

All good is relative, and therefore what is the best for Englishmen, with their peculiar habits and prejudices, may not be the best for all nations. And the system that answers its purpose so well, as that it shall not be worth while to risk any material change, or revolution, may yet be capable of much improvement. Indeed, if the injuries it receives from time be not repaired, it will at length become quite another thing, from that which had been the subject of our encomiums. It will be, to use a comparison not quite so grave as the occasion might require, like re-



peating to an old woman of eighty, the poems that were addressed to her when she was twenty. The old lady might be well enough pleased with the flattery, and the flatterer might succeed in gaining her good graces, and something to compensate for the ridicule to which he would expose himself; but he certainly would make himself the subject of ridicule. In this situation, according to uncontradicted report, stands Mr. Burke.

As my *Letter to the Editor of the Morning Chronicle*, in reply to the calumny of Mr. Burke, has only appeared in the News Papers, and many of my readers may not have seen it, I shall subjoin it to this Preface.

Now that I have occasion to mention the subject of *calumny*, by which I have already suffered so much, and, in the present state of men's minds, am exposed to suffer still more, I shall observe that, in an account of the state of Birmingham, transmitted to the Ministry on the 14th of December last, and which is become the subject of much conversation, it is said, that "the only people there from whom  
" any thing is to be apprehended, are some  
" young men brought up under Priestley."

This information could only proceed from  
ignorance

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ignorance or malice. All the young men to whom I ever gave any lectures in Birmingham, were those of my own congregation, on the subject of *natural and revealed religion*, as I now do at Hackney, and to whom I never mentioned the subject of *politics*. And I think I can engage for all of them, that, whatever be their political opinions, which they could not learn from me, they may be depended upon, from a principle of religion, for a quiet submission to the laws of their country, whether they approve of them or not.

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*To the Editor of the Morning Chronicle.*


SIR,

Taking it for granted that your account of Mr. Burke's speech, in the debate on Mr. Sheridan's late motion, may be depended upon, I beg leave, through the channel of your Paper, to ask him, what authority he had for asserting, as he did, that "I gave my name to  
" the sentiments in the Correspondence of  
" the Revolution Society in England with the  
" Jacobin Societies in France; sentiments  
" adverse to our Constitution?" That Correspondence I have seen, but have not yet read. I am not, nor ever was, a member of  
any

any political society whatever; nor did I ever sign any paper originating with any of them. This I do not say because I have any objection to such societies, but my studies and pursuits have been of a different kind.

I also wish to ask Mr. Burke what authority he has for asserting, that “ I was made a citizen of France, because I had declared hostility to the Constitution of England?” This assertion, like the preceding, is nothing else than a malignant calumny; being an untruth, which, in the present state of things, is calculated to do me the greatest injury. I was made a citizen of France at the same time with Mr. Wilberforce, and several others; and I had no more previous knowledge of the measure than he had; and will Mr. Burke say that Mr. Wilberforce was made a citizen of France “ because *he* had declared hostility to the Constitution of this country?”

Though few of my publications relate to politics, I have more than once expressed myself in favour of our Constitution, and I call upon Mr. Burke to shew that I have ever written any thing that can, by any fair construction, be said to be *against* it. I conceive myself to be a much better friend to the true principles  
of



of it than he now is. When Mr. Burke and I were acquainted, and we used to converse on the subject of politics (for we had hardly any other common topic) our sentiments respecting the Constitution, and the principles of liberty in general, were, as I then conceived, the same. Had I been in his present situation with respect to the favours of government, my opinions might have changed as his have done; but continuing in the same situation in that respect, my views of things have continued the same.

I would observe on this occasion, that I do not see the wisdom of making persons enemies of the Constitution whether they will or not. If the time should come, that this Constitution shall want the aid of all its friends, those who are now the most forward to declare their attachment to it, may not be the most to be depended upon. If we learn any thing from history or observation, it is that boasting and insolence are generally followed by cowardice, and that patient suffering is the mark of the truest courage.

Mr. Burke's sneering at me for "not having been sufficiently rewarded for my great services in *philosophy, politics, and religion*,"

is

is a mean insult, in one basking in the sunshine of power, on an old acquaintance who is under its frowns. What does Mr. Burke know of my services in philosophy, or religion; when the probability is, that he is utterly unacquainted with any thing that I have written on these subjects? When have I made any boast of my services, whatever they be, or intimated any expectation of a reward? though every man who gives his time to any important subject deserves the thanks of his countrymen, whatever may have been his success. However, far from expecting any reward, I shall think myself very happy if I escape without farther punishment. But that party spirit, which is so much inflamed by the writings and speeches of Mr. Burke, gives me but little encouragement to expect so much.

Submitting these observations to the cooler thoughts (if he have any such) of Mr. Burke, and of your numerous readers, among some of whom I hope to meet with candour,

I remain, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

J. PRIESTLEY.

*Clapton,*

*March 7. 1793.*

# FAST SERMON,

FOR 1793.

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*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm xlv. 1.*

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

WE are called upon by the governors of the nation, alarmed, no doubt, at the present serious and very critical state of public affairs, to humble ourselves before God, by fasting and prayer, that, as the supreme disposer of events, he may be pleased to avert the calamities with which we are threatened. With this call, we voluntarily and cheerfully comply. For though, in every thing respecting God, and our duty to him, we disclaim all human authority, praying when and how we please, we are ready to join with any of our brethren, of whatever denomination, in any sort of religion in which we are equally concerned.

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None,

None, I trust, are more sensible than we of this Christian Society are, of the universal dominion of God ; that the fate of our nation, and of every other nation, is at all times in his hands ; that nothing can come to pass without his appointment or permission ; and that he never appoints or permits any thing but for the best of purposes, respecting the happiness of his creatures, of whom he is the true and common parent.

In this interesting situation, as creatures before their Creator, we have nothing to do with what are called *politics*. We neither praise nor blame, those who have the conduct of public affairs, for bringing us into this situation, or even consider whether they have brought us into this situation or not. We have at this time nothing to do with the justice or injustice, according to the rules of human judgment, of the war in which we are engaged, or of any other measures of administration. For we are now to consider *primary*, and not *secondary* causes. We are to consider every thing that has taken place as the act of God, and not that of man, whom the Supreme Being only employs as his instruments, to bring about his great designs.

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In other ſituations, our judgments being as free as thoſe of other men, we may freely praiſe or blame. We may, with our governors call the war in which we are engaged, *juſt* and *neceſſary*, or with many others, unjuſt and unneceſſary: for with reſpect to things of this nature, men will judge differently, according to the different views they have of things. But with reſpect to God, whoſe providence we now acknowledge, we muſt ſuppoſe every thing to be right; that if calamity await us, it was proper, in the general plan of things, that it ſhould befall us, and therefore that we muſt ſubmit to it, as under the righteous government of God; having recourſe to ſuch methods as are neceſſary to regain his favour, by making ourſelves the proper objects of it: that whatever it be that has been made the inſtrument of our affliction, it may be removed.

I do not know any portion of ſcripture more proper for the ſubject of our meditations, according to this general view of things, and the preſent circumſtances of the nation, than the whole of the pſalm from which my text is taken. It contains ſuch ſentiments, as, if properly impreſſed upon our minds, cannot



fail to exhibit what is most calamitous and alarming in it, in the most favourable light that it will bear. It shews us the hand of God in all the great events that affect the welfare of society; thence leading us to expect a happy conclusion of them, and in the mean time to make the best use of the scenes before us.

It is true that, in the language of this psalm, *desolation is now spreading over the earth*. The flames of war are extending themselves, in a manner unknown in any period of our times, and threatening us with calamities altogether new, and therefore such as we cannot tell how to guard against, or to prepare for. But we are here reminded, that though the passions and the hands of men are employed as the instruments, they are the desolations that *God* is making in the earth; and we are invited to view them with attention and without dread, as any other of the works of God. *Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth*.

We are also led by the psalmist, in the darkest scenes of providence, to put our trust in that Being who directs the whole, not doubting but that he will bring good out of

all the evil. *Be still, and know that I am God. I will be glorified in the Heathen. I will be exalted in the earth.* And if God be finally glorified, we may be assured, that the issue of all will be the virtue and happiness of men. He is the common parent of all mankind, and these are the corrections that he is administering for our common benefit.

From this psalm we learn, that it becomes good men in particular to have an eye to the hand of God in all events, and never to forget, that, tempestuous as the times may be, there is an able though invisible pilot at the helm; a pilot who commands not only the ship, but the waves themselves; so that we have all the reason in the world to make ourselves perfectly easy as to the final issue. *God is our refuge in strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

Lastly, we are here taught to assure ourselves, that when wars, like diseases or any

other evils, shall have answered the end for which they were sent, (and we cannot doubt but that they will answer this end, and no other) he who raised the storm will cause it to cease. *He maketh wars to cease from the ends of the earth. He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire.*

In order to throw our thoughts into a proper channel on this occasion, I shall, in this discourse, in the first place, consider war as the work of God, shewing that, calamitous as it is, it is, like all other evils, calculated to produce many good effects; and is therefore no unsuitable means to be employed by the benevolent Ruler of the universe. In the second place I shall consider what we, as under the moral government of God, must do in order to remove the evil of war, and every other judgment inflicted upon us by a wise and just providence; and in the last place I shall endeavour to suggest such observations, as appear to me to result from the doctrine on which I shall insist, and to be particularly adapted to the present state of the nation.

In the first place I propose to consider war as the work of God, shewing that, calamitous

as it is, it is calculated to produce many good effects, and is therefore no unsuitable means to be employed by the benevolent Ruler of the universe, though generally implying the greatest guilt in *men*, who, to gratify their ambition, revenge, and other passions, knowingly involve millions of their fellow creatures, for whom they have no feeling of compassion, in the most complicated distress.

War does not materially differ from other afflictions, by which God is pleased to instruct the world, and correct the vices of it. The discipline is, no doubt, severe, but it is calculated to be salutary. A state of perfect security, we well know, is highly unfavourable to virtue, and consequently to happiness. Without the alarms of war, mankind, in the early and rude state of society, would have sunk into such a state of indulgence, as they were never known to enjoy without sinking into vices fatal to the health of their bodies, and to the tranquillity of their minds; and having no distant enemy to unite them among themselves, and promote those virtues which arise from a sense of having a common cause and interest, as benevolence and public spirit; instead of one enemy, who would give men

disturbance now and then, they would in fact have many, who would have it in their power to do them perpetual injuries ; and they might suffer more by continual ill offices, from those with whom they had a constant and necessary intercourse, than from an enemy more distant. Also a state of great exertion, such as war makes necessary, is always a state of great animation ; and this is better for man than a state of languor, which, till men be duly improved by discipline and instruction, they would naturally sink into.

War, by operating like the pestilence, and other diseases, and various calamitous accidents, in rendering life precarious, is the discipline of a wise and kind Providence, having very obvious uses. Since a constant sense of the uncertainty of life, and of all its enjoyments, is far better calculated to form excellent characters, in the present state of our minds in other respects, than the idea of absolute certainty with respect to life, or any thing to be enjoyed in it. It teaches us caution, vigilance, vigorous exertion, fortitude, and resignation to the will of God ; qualities without which, there would be nothing to be greatly admired or esteemed in human nature. To  
suppose

suppose that men might have been trained to these virtues without the calamities of war, or discipline of a similar nature, which render life and property uncertain, is what we are by no means authorized to do by observation or experience.

Besides these benefits resulting from a state of war, as from evils of other kinds, which make a necessary part of the general discipline of the world, many positive benefits have been indirectly derived from it. The exercise of the ingenuity of man, in devising the means of offence and defence in war, led the way to the discovery of the qualities of metals, improvements in mechanics, and other things highly useful in times of peace; discoveries, which it is probable that nothing but so strong a stimulus as results from a state of war could have excited man to make.

Conquests made by war have contributed to mix, and thereby to civilize, the different nations of the world, when they might otherwise have continued much longer in that state of barbarism, which would have resulted from this want of intercourse with each other.

War has also been the means of carrying learning and learned men, where they would  
never

never have gone voluntarily; and thus science, and improvements of various kinds, have had a more rapid spread in the world. We complain, and justly, of persecution for conscience sake, as the most unjust and cruel of all wars; consisting in the oppression of the wise, the virtuous, and the weak, by the ignorant, the wicked, and the strong. But by this means true religion has had a much more speedy and extensive spread in the world, than it could otherwise have obtained. Both the peopling and the present liberties of the North American States were owing to the oppression of this country; and we cannot say that it would ever have been peopled and civilized, by Christian inhabitants, or its liberties have been established by any other means. At the same time then that we justly blame the designs and the conduct of men, who, to gratify their own passions, brought so much misery on their fellow creatures; let us acknowledge and bless the hand of God, which by means of so much evil, has brought about so much good.

But though it cannot be denied that war has been productive of many and great benefits to mankind, it is a kind of discipline that

that we shall not stand in need of, when the world shall have passed its state of childhood and youth, in which we must consider it at present; and when we shall be arrived at a state of greater maturity, in which we shall be capable of what may be called a more liberal treatment. Having learned wisdom by long experience, we shall be able to proceed in the paths of knowledge, virtue, and happiness, without those severities which were necessary to draw us into them.

Whatever foundation there may be for this comparison of the whole human race, to the individuals of which it is composed, we are expressly assured in the Scriptures, that the happy time will come, when *Wars shall cease*. We may therefore conclude, that hereafter they will be no longer necessary. *It shall come to pass in the last days, (Isaiah ii. 2.) that men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.* This most pleasing prospect is confirmed by the concurrent testimony of many other prophecies. We may therefore look forward to it with the most assured hope and joy.

This



This great event will probably be brought about by natural and adequate causes. Men will at length be convinced, though by long and dear-bought experience, that wars have almost always been made to gratify the ambition or avarice of a few, at the expence of every thing that is dear to the many. Also both a spirit of commerce, which is extending every day, and the true principles of christianity, which we cannot but think will be better understood and more generally diffused, the more attention is given to it, will no doubt greatly contribute to bring about so desirable an end.

In the second place I am to shew, what we must do in order to remove the calamities of war, or any other judgment inflicted by a wise and righteous Providence ; and in order to do this, I shall take a more particular view of the conduct of divine Providence with respect of war, and national calamities of every kind, shewing that they do not come without the will of God, and in consequence of his displeasure ; and therefore, that we have no reason to expect that the effect will cease till the cause be removed.

Now we cannot too often or too seriously  
reflect,

reflect, and therefore I repeat the observation, that in the situation in which we now are, we have nothing to do with the share that *men* have had in the calamities we feel, or those that we fear ; but to consider the hand that *God* has had in them ; that, considering what we have done to make him our enemy, we may do every thing that is in our power to make him our friend. For the present, therefore, let us look off from men, in order to look upwards towards God, and inwards upon ourselves.

If we believe that the world is under the administration of divine Providence, (and surely he that made the world will not neglect to attend to it ; he that formed men will not fail to watch over them) if we believe that nothing can come to pass through the whole extent of the works of God, without his knowledge and influence, that he *does whatsoever he pleases in the armies of heaven above, and among the inhabitants of the earth here beneath*, we must believe with the prophet Amos, (iii. 6) that, properly speaking, there is *no evil in any city, or state*, but God is the Author of it ; and therefore that the evil will not be removed, till he shall think proper to re-  
move

move it, the real occasion of it being removed in the first place.

If the immediate cause of our sufferings be enemies without, or the bad conduct of our rulers at home, (for I mean to comprehend the political views of all parties) still it is by the permission of God, who ruleth among the children of men, that any country has such enemies, or such rulers. Bad ministers may be obtruded upon an earthly sovereign, who being no more than a man, may be deceived by men, and mistake his own interest, as well as that of his people; but they cannot be obtruded upon a Being of perfect discernment and uncontrouled power.

If David was a *man after God's own heart* for one purpose, Nebuchadnezzar was no less so for another. The proud king of Assyria is expressly called *a staff in the hand of God* for the punishment of various nations, and he could do nothing but what the hand which held the staff directed. In the eye of the world, particular men are said to be *out of their place*, or unfit for it; but in the eye of God, no man is out of his place. Pharaoh himself is expressly said (Exod. ix. 16) to have been *raised up* by God, for one of the greatest purposes

poses in the course of his providence. In fact, every person without exception is where God has placed him; and it is arraigning the wisdom of his providence, to say that he has placed him wrong, or that, however men may be disappointed in him, he is not qualified to act the part that God has given him to act; and if his counsels or conduct bring calamity upon any country, it was precisely what God intended they should do.

The death of seventy thousand Israelites by pestilence, is ascribed to the pride and folly of David in ordering the people to be numbered; but then that thought is said to have arisen in the heart of David, because the Divine Being thought proper to punish that people. For in the following manner is the history of that event introduced. 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. *And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, to say, Go number Israel and Judah.* So also the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar, were brought about by the infatuation of the last of their kings, Zedekiah; but that very calamity had been threatened, and foretold, again and again, before Zedekiah was born, as a punishment  
for

for the long prevailing wickedness of the people in general. It is the same God who still rules in the affairs of men. The maxims of his government are also the same. He still punishes sinful nations by means of weak or wicked governors, and by wars and other calamities, occasioned by the weakness or wickedness of such governors; *and who shall say unto him, What dost thou?*

It becomes us, therefore, now that we are assembled in the presence of God, to have respect to *him*, and to his providence, and to overlook the part that men may have had in our calamities. With respect to the war in which we are now engaged, some of you will entertain one opinion, and others of you a different one. But on this occasion we have nothing to do with the opinions, or politics of any party. What we have now to consider is simply this, that it has pleased the Ruler of the universe to afflict almost all Europe with the dreadful calamity of war, and therefore that all we suffer, or have to suffer, is the consequence of the divine displeasure; and we are assured (Lam. iii. 33) that *he never afflicts willingly, or grieves the children of men.*

What we have to do, then, is, by due humility



mility before God, who *loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity*, and by proper conduct with respect to him, to endeavour to recover his favour; since he alone can remove the scourge that he has brought upon us. And he can be no more at a loss for proper and natural means to effect this design of mercy, than he was to effect his designs of judgment. If we *acknowledge God in all our ways*, and by approving our hearts and our conduct before him, make it fit that we should be reinstated in our late enviable situation, he will easily provide the means of doing it. *Let us only return to the Lord our God*, and, as we read Hos. vi. 1, *he will return to us; and as he has torn, he will also heal us; as he has smitten, so he will bind us up.*

This doctrine of the hand of God being in all events, ought by no means to slacken our endeavours to better our condition in any respect; because God works by means of the natural passions, and the natural activity of man. It is God who gives us day by day our daily bread, which we are therefore instructed daily to pray for, as his gift; and yet we diligently plow and sow the ground, and use other natural means to procure bread; well knowing that it cannot be obtained without those

means. In like manner, God has wisely provided, in the course of his Providence, that wisdom and virtue have a strict and necessary connection with the prosperity of a nation. *Righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is a reproach to any people.* Prov. xiv. 34.

As to the particulars of our national sins, which, on a day of public fasting and humiliation, we seem to be called upon to confess and forsake, I shall not, for obvious reasons, endeavour to point them out to you. With respect to sins of a *personal* nature, all men are nearly agreed; but as to sins that are properly *national*, such as have had the concurrence of the governing powers of the nation, and which they alone can put a stop to, different persons will form very different opinions. Nay, the very same things, the same political measures, that some persons consider as highly iniquitous, and calling down the vengeance of God upon the nation, others think just, necessary, and on every account deserving the highest applause. Let each person then judge for himself, and do whatever may be in his power towards the reformation of what he shall deem to be amiss.

While I am exhorting to repentance and reformation of manners, as the only effectual  
means

means of removing national calamities, by securing the favour of Divine Providence, I am far from thinking that, with respect to morals, we are worse than other nations: though, considering our superior advantages, with respect to knowledge and instruction, this may be the case. Nay, it by no means follows, that though we should be even better than other nations, our sufferings may not be great and exemplary. We see that the most innocent individuals are often, for wise and excellent purposes, made to drink deep of the cup of affliction; and particularly it has not been unfrequent in the conduct of Divine Providence, to make nations mutual scourges to each other; and even for the virtuous to suffer most in the first place, though greater punishments be reserved for the more wicked afterwards.

In that most just war of the eleven tribes against that of Benjamin, the former sustained several severe defeats, though the guilty tribe was almost exterminated at the last. As we read 1 Pet. iv. 17. *Judgment may begin at the house of God. But if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*



Let us then humble ourselves before God, and while his *judgments are abroad in the earth*, (Isa. xxvi. 9) let us *all*, without distinction, *learn righteousness*, and be disposed to peace. Let us more especially take care, that a state of war, though conceived to be ever so just and necessary, do not excite a spirit of revenge, and lead us to exult in the calamities of our fellow creatures. It is the duty of a Christian to *weep with all that weep*, though the sufferers be our declared enemies. All men are our brethren, and, like our common parent, we should neither inflict, nor wish, any evil, but what we think will be productive of good to them, as well as to ourselves. This, if we must be at war, is to make war like men, and like Christians, if such an idea was not in itself absurd. Every thing else is brutal rage, and savage barbarism.

We should ever consider war as a most undesirable means, to a very desirable end. Peace should ever be our great object, and to delight in war itself, without any respect to that end, is nothing better than a disposition to robbery and murder, sanctified indeed by the laws of men, and disguised by other names; but the same thing in the eye of reason and of God.

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This observation is fully applicable to the war in which we are now engaged with the people of France; especially as they are our neighbours; to whom, as such, we owe every kind and friendly office, and with whom every act of hostility, as of bad neighbourhood in any other case, ought to be the subject of particular regret. For neighbouring nations, like neighbouring families, have it much in their *power* to assist and befriend each other, and are therefore under a *natural obligation* so to do.

This leads me, in the last place, to make such observations, and suggest such advices, as appear to me to result from the doctrine on which I have been insisting, and to be particularly suitable to the present state of this country.

1. The consideration of God being the ultimate and proper Author of all events, and consequently of any calamity in which we may be involved, naturally tends to lessen our resentment against men, as only the instruments in the hand of God; though, in a just view of things, it does not affect our persuasion of their guilt, which depends altogether on their dispositions and designs, and not on

those of the Being who makes use of them, and who brings good out of the evil that they intended.

This habitual regard to God in all events, evidently had this happy effect on the mind of Joseph. He never expressed any resentment against his brethren on account of their selling him into Egypt, though for many years he had been a great sufferer by their shocking injustice and inhumanity. He even seemed desirous that they should not reflect upon themselves for it, so far did his piety and benevolence carry him. *Now therefore, says he to them, (Gen. xlv. 5) be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God sent me before you to preserve life, to preserve you a posterity in the earth.* Again, when they applied to him after the death of their father, intreating him to forgive them, agreeably to his dying request, he said, Gen. l. 19, *Fear not, for am I in the place of God? As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not. I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.*

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The same consideration was the means of restraining the anger of David against Shimei, who cursed him so bitterly in his flight from Absalom, saying, (2 Sam. xvi. 10) *So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.*

From this principle, every truly pious person, who acknowledges the hand of God in all events, is disposed to regard the wicked, as well as the weak, with more compassion than anger; and this has a much happier effect on the mind, both in calming its own emotions, and exciting our endeavours to promote the reformation and welfare of others.

If the situation of our country, in the eye of God, be such as really to require the calamities we experience, or those that we fear, it is vain to indulge our resentment against the mere instruments of them. For if they were removed, others would be found, till the ends of Divine Providence were fully answered.

This consideration should not, however, lead us to a tame and blind acquiescence in all political measures, nor prevent our endeavours to do ourselves justice, whenever we conceive that we have received an injury, and the re-

drels of it is in our power ; but by leading us to look in the firſt place to the primary cauſe of our ſufferings, our attention will be more calm, and our endeavours better directed, with reſpect to the ſecondary cauſe of them ; and we ſhall be better prepared either to ſuffer with reſignation, or to act with vigour, as occaſion may require.

In all caſes, the piety of a true Chriſtian will abate much of his animofity againſt men. He will wiſh well to his country, (though not excluſively of the reſt of his brethren of mankind) and he will endeavour to make himſelf as uſeful as he poſſibly can ; but he will be moſt ſolicitous to promote the cauſe of virtue and religion ; confident that this is the beſt means of averting national calamities of every kind, that men and ſtateſmen, friends or enemies, are only inſtruments in the hands of God, and that good will be made to reſult from all evil.

2. The war in which we are now engaged, though peculiar in its nature, and threatening to be peculiarly calamitous to all the nations concerned in it, beſides being attended with the advantage to be expected from calamity in general, in making men ſerious, reſreſſing  
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vice and exceſs of every kind, and inculcating moderation and ſobriety of mind, promiſes to be peculiarly *inſtructive*, with reſpect to matters both of a civil and of an eccleſiaſtical nature.

This war, in common with moſt others, is in part, no doubt, a war of ambition ; the parties concerned in the alliance againſt France (probably all of them except ourſelves) hoping to be gainers, by getting an additional extent of territory, little as ſuch an addition of dominion contributes to the real benefit of the ſubjects, though it adds to the imaginary glory of the prince. But what is peculiar to this war, is, that it is a war reſpecting *the principles of government*, and therefore neceſſarily leads to the diſcuſſion of the ſubject, infinitely more than any writings ; and all diſcuſſion leads to knowledge, and all real knowledge to improvement. We may expect, therefore, that, whatever be the iſſue of the war with reſpect to victories or defeats, it will lead to the melioration of the condition of men, as members of civil ſociety.

3. This war is ſometimes called a war of *religion*, it being thought that, in the new government of France, there is to be no proper eſtabliſhment of any form of religion whatever. Here then will be another great experiment

experiment added to that in North America, to decide the question, whether the business of *religion*, and that of *civil government*, can be better conducted separately, or in conjunction. But, in fact, experience has already decided this great question. We have already seen what it is that an establishment of religion has been able to do in France. Under what mode of government in this respect, was the great number of unbelievers that is so much complained of in France formed, but under an establishment, a form of religion prescribed, and provided for by the state? It is not even pretended, that, excepting the case of the emigrant clergy, they have been the *irreligious* that have banished the *religious*. For it is acknowledged that the emigrant noblesse had as little religion as the members of the National Convention, all of whom, however, are by no means unbelievers in Christianity. In fact, the civil establishment of Christianity had almost extinguished every thing of real Christianity in the country; the superior clergy themselves, having, by repute, as little of it as the noblesse. And it will not be pretended, that the Atheism, now so generally ascribed to the French nation, was produced by the revolution,

lution, and did not exist in the country before. Can it be doubted, then, but that a friend to real Christianity must be an enemy to the civil establishment of it ?

4. As a believer in revelation, and consequently in prophecy, I am led by the present aspect of things, to look forward to events of the greatest magnitude and importance, leading to the final happy state of the world. At every idea of this kind, unbelievers will smile. But I am now addressing a society of Christians, believers in revelation and in prophecy, as well as myself; and I see no reason to be ashamed of this belief.

Three great events seem to be pretty clearly announced in the prophetical books of Scripture, and to have a connection with each other, viz. the fall of Antichrist, (probably the Papal power) that of the Turkish empire, and the return of the Jews to their own country, Judea. And, according to the uniform language of prophecy, this last event is to be preceded by a state of very great calamity, such as the world had never known before. In Daniel it is said, (chap. xii. 1) *that shall be a time of trouble, such as there never was since there*  
§ *was*



*was a nation, even to that same time; and at that time shall thy people be delivered.*

I am far from being singular in my ideas on this subject. Dr. Hartley, one of the greatest and most intelligent, as well as one of the best of men, takes it for granted, that “great temporal evils and woes,” as he says (*Observations on Man*, Vol. II. p. 220) “will fall upon the nominal Christian states of these Western parts, this Christian Babylon,” as he styles them, “before the great revolution predicted in the Scriptures; before the kingdoms of the world, become the kingdom of the Lord, and of his Christ.”

After pointing out the probable causes of this great calamity, he says, p. 445, “It would be great rashness to fix a time for the breaking of the storm, that hangs over our heads; as it is blindness and infatuation not to see it, not to be aware that it may break. And yet this infatuation has always attended falling states. The kingdoms of Judah and Israel were thus infatuated. Let no one,” he then adds, “deceive himself, or others. The present circumstances of the world, are extraordinary and critical, beyond what has ever yet happened.” If they were so  
when



when he wrote, how much more are they so now ?

The power of the Pope is now rapidly on the decline. It has lost its best supports ; and France, which gave the Popes their temporal sovereignty, is now most hostile to them. This exactly agrees with the prophecies. All the other powers of Europe, which *have had but one mind*, (Rev. xvii. 13) *and have given their power and strength to the beast*, as this Antichristian power is also called ; these are *all to hate the harlot*, (as the same power is also termed) *to make her desolate and bare, and even to eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God will put it into their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdoms to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*

The Turkish empire also seems to be shaking to its base, so that it will probably soon fall ; and then, though I own no present appearances favour the expectation, I shall look with confidence for the accomplishment of the numerous prophecies relating to the restoration of the Jews.

But these events are to be preceded by great calamities, such as now perhaps we see the beginning of. Happy, my brethren, they, who  
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by the help of a firm faith in the Providence of God, and obedience to his will, shall be prepared for these events; whether we be so happy as to survive the storm, and see the glorious times which are to follow, or not. But to accomplish all these events, will probably be a work of considerable time.

5. While, with the feelings of humanity, and as becomes Christians, we *weep with those that weep*, and who, in the present extensive calamity will, no doubt, be very numerous, both at home among ourselves, and abroad among our allies and our enemies, let us not lose sight of those just and enlarged views of things which are suggested by the consideration, that *the Lord reigneth*; while this is the case, *the earth*, and all the inhabitants of it; have reason to *rejoice*, Psal. xcvi. 1. This consideration throws a strong beam of light on the darkest part of the scene that is now, or ever can be, before us; and will enable us, with a calm and steady eye, to attend to the origin, the progress, and the tendency, of the approaching storm; to the causes, and the consequences, of all the great and calamitous events that will probably come before us, though our own dearest interests, and those of the

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the persons for whom we are the most concerned, be involved in them. While we know that nothing can come to pass but by the appointment of God, the wise and benevolent Ruler of the universe, we must always have more reason to hope than to fear, to rejoice than to grieve. And since the arguments for the goodness of God oblige us to suppose that there is at all times more happiness than misery in the world, and we are no less to *rejoice with those that rejoice*, than to *weep with those that weep*, let us not fail to consider that the *evils* we may see are more than balanced by the *good* that at present we do not see, and especially by that which will be the result of the evil.

Since we have reason to believe that the world is destined to a state of great improvement in knowledge, virtue, and happiness, let us, where our conduct can have no influence, dispassionately observe the wonderful manner in which the great, though probably calamitous, events that are before us will operate to so good an end. And especially let each of us, according to our ability and opportunity, zealously co-operate with those glorious views of Divine Providence, by doing every thing in  
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our power to diminifh the maſs of evil, and to add to the common ſtock of knowledge, of virtue, and of happineſs.

It is a great and momentous æra to which we are brought. A great improvement will, no doubt, be finally made in the condition of man, and happy will be the willing instruments of it. They are, in the language of the Apoſtle, (2 Cor. vi. 1) *workers together with God*. Whether we be immediately employed in advancing any branch of liberal and uſeful knowledge, promoting the cauſe of public virtue, or public liberty, or any thing that tends to general happineſs, we ſhall act an uſeful part in the great drama; and whether we live to finiſh the part we are engaged in acting, or be cut off in the miſt of it, our work, or that part of it that we were appointed to perform, will be completed, and we ſhall receive the plaudit of our Judge, *Well done, good and faithful ſervants*. To thoſe who are uſefully and properly employed, nothing can come amiſs. And though we may not live to ſee the great cataſtrophe to which things are ripening, (for that is probably very diſtant) we may rejoice in ſeeing as much of it as we may be permitted to ſee in this world; and when we  
awake

awake at the resurrection, we shall find the great work, which had been the object of all our wishes and endeavours, completed in its full extent, and shall reflect with unspeakable satisfaction on the part that we ourselves have been called forth, and enabled, to act in it.

Lastly. In all events, whether we are called forth to do more or less, it is our never failing consolation, that while *the Lord reigneth*, the earth, and especially the righteous in it, have reason to rejoice; for though *clouds and darknes be round about him, righteousness and judgment are the foundation of his throne.* Pf. xcvi. 2.

Whatever be the fate of particular individuals, distinguished for their virtue and ability, it is wisely provided in the course of Divine Providence, that great occasions call forth, and in fact create, great characters, such as the occasions require; and by whose generous exertions the evils are surmounted, and a better state of things brought about.

If we read the history of the civil commotions in this country, in France at various periods, or in America, we shall find extraordinary men unexpectedly rising up to act the most important parts; men who had never been heard of before, and whom nothing

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but such great occasions could have produced, Read the history of the great plague in London, that of Marfeilles, or that of any period of great calamity, of any kind, or in any country, at least a christian one, and you will find no want of men proper for them, suitable pilots for every storm; and let us not doubt but that this will be the case, if ever any great calamity, from which no condition of man is exempt, should befall this country of ours.

It is another consolation, that seasons of war, and great calamities of any kind, cannot, in their own nature, be of long continuance. In proportion to their violence, they must be of short duration; and as in the natural world, storms and hurricanes are of use in clearing the atmosphere, producing a better temperature of air, and a more serene and cloudless sky, than could have been had without them, let us not doubt but that the same will be the issue of storms and hurricanes in the civil world, be their violence ever so great, and the devastation they make ever so extensive.

If the calamitous times that I fear are approaching should prove to be those which are announced in prophecy, as the greatest that  
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the world ſhall ever experience, whatever be their duration, they will, according to the ſame prophecies, introduce a ſtate of things the moſt truly paradifiſical and happy, and of the longeſt continuance. It will be the proper *kingdom of God, and of heaven*, that kingdom which is typified by *the little ſtone* in the viſion of Nebuchadnezzar, which was *cut out of the mountain without hands*, which *fell upon, and brake in pieces* the whole of that image which represented all the preceding empires, and *became itſelf a great mountain filling the whole earth*. It will take place of all other modes of government, and continue for ever. Dan. ii. 44, &c.

Coincident with the ſame great epocha in the ſtate of the world may be, according to ſome interpretations of the book of Revelations, what is called the *fiſt reſurrection*, or that of the eminently wiſe and good in every preceding age, and eſpecially the perſecuted for righteouſneſs' ſake, who in ſome ſenſe or other will *live and reign with Chriſt a thouſand years*. Rev. xx. 4.

Whether this be literally true, or not, the ſufferings of the eminently pious and virtuous, and of the intrepid in the cauſe of truth and religion, cannot be, comparatively ſpeaking,



of long continuance, and will be succeeded by ages of glory and happiness. Let the oppressor do his worst, there is a limit fixed by a superior power that he cannot pass. *The wrath of man shall be made to praise God, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain.* Pf. lxxvi. 10. Under the government of this great and good Being all the afflictions to which we can be exposed in this world are in fact *light* and momentary; and if they be endured with patience, fortitude, and true piety, they will be the means of working out for us, as the Apostle says, 2 Cor. iv. 17, *a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.* They cannot extend beyond the term of the present life, which, as James says, (ch. iv. 14) is but as *a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

Having this faith in the government of God, and the prophecies of Scripture, let us *continue stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of our Lord, knowing that our labour shall not finally be in vain in the Lord.*

FINIS.



*The present State of Europe compared with Antient  
Prophecies;*

# A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

THE GRAVEL PIT MEETING IN HACKNEY,

FEBRUARY 28, 1794,

*Being the Day appointed for a General Fast.*

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. &c,

WITH A PREFACE,

CONTAINING THE

Reasons for the Author's leaving England.

---

B. Quo fugis? Expecta. Liceat condiscere causas  
Dissidii. Tu nostra, puer, nisi fallor, amabas  
Pascua.

P. Parce, Parens, damnare tuum.—Tibi lætior annis  
Tunc animus fuerat. Nunc intractabilis, asper.

*Petrarch on taking leave of his patron, the Cardinal Colonna.*

Nos patriæ fines, nos dulcia linquimus arva.

*Virgil.*

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## P R E F A C E.

**T**HIS discourse, and those on the *Evidences of Divine Revelation*, which will be published about the same time, being the last of my labours in this country, I hope my friends, and the public, will indulge me while I give the reasons of their *being* the last, in consequence of my having at length, after much hesitation, and now with reluctance, come to a resolution to leave this country.

After the riots in Birmingham, it was the expectation, and evidently the wish, of many persons, that I should immediately fly to France, or America. But I had no consciousness of guilt to induce me to fly my country\*. On the contrary, I came directly to London, and instantly, by means of my friend Mr. Russell, signified to the king's ministers, that I

\* If, instead of flying from lawless violence, I had been flying from public justice, I could not have been pursued with more rancour, nor could my friends have been more anxious for my safety. One man, who happened to see me on horseback on one of the nights in which I escaped from Birmingham, expressed his regret that he had not taken me, expecting probably some considerable reward, when, as he said, it was so easy for him to have done it. My friends earnestly advised me to disguise myself as I was going to London. But all that was done in that way was taking a place for me in the mail coach, which I entered at Worcester, in another name than my own. However, the friend who had the courage to receive me in London had thought it necessary to provide a dress that should disguise me, and also a method of making my escape, in case the house should have been attacked on my account; and for some time my friends would not suffer me to appear in the streets.

was there, and ready, if they thought proper, to be interrogated on the subject of the riot. But no notice was taken of the message.

Ill treated as I thought I had been, not merely by the populace of Birmingham, for they were the mere tools of their superiors, but by the country in general, which evidently exulted in our sufferings, and afterwards by the representatives of the nation, who refused to inquire into the cause of them, I own I was not without deliberating upon the subject of emigration; and several flattering proposals were made me, especially from France, which was then at peace within itself, and with all the world; and I was at one time much inclined to go thither, on account of its nearness to England, the agreeableness of its climate, and my having many friends there.

But I likewise considered that, if I went thither, I should have no employment of the kind to which I had been accustomed; and the season of active life not being, according to the course of nature, quite over, I wished to make as much use of it as I could. I therefore determined to continue in England, exposed as I was not only to unbounded obloquy and insult, but to every kind of outrage; and after my invitation to succeed my friend Dr. Price, I had no hesitation about it. Accordingly I took up my residence where I now am, though so prevalent was the idea of my insecurity, that I was not able to take the house in my own name; and when a friend of mine took it in *his*, it was with much difficulty that, after some time, the landlord was prevailed upon to transfer

*Prefact.*

transfer the lease to me. He expressed his apprehensions, not only of the house that I occupied being demolished, but also a capital house in which he himself resides, at the distance of no less than twenty miles from London, whither he supposed the rioters would go next, merely for suffering me to live in a house of *his*.

But even this does not give such an idea of the danger that not only myself, but every person, and every thing, that had the slightest connexion with me, were supposed to be in, as the following. The managers of one of the principal charities among the Dissenters applied to me to preach their annual sermon, and I had consented. But the treasurer, a man of fortune, who knew nothing more of me than my name, was so much alarmed at it, that he declared he could not sleep. I therefore, to his great relief, declined preaching at all.

When it was known that I was settled where I now am, several of my friends, who lived near me; were seriously advised to remove their papers, and other most valuable effects, to some place of greater safety in London. On the 14th of July, 1792, it was taken for granted by many of the neighbours, that my house was to come down, just as at Birmingham the year before. When the Hackney association was formed, several servants in the neighbourhood actually removed their goods; and when there was some political meeting at the house of Mr. Breillat, though about two miles from my house, a woman whose daughter was servant in the house

contiguous to mine, came to her mistress, to entreat that she might be out of the way; and it was not without much difficulty that she was pacified, and prevailed upon to continue in the house, her mistress saying that she was as safe as herself.

On several other occasions the neighbourhood has been greatly alarmed on account of my being so near them. Nor was this without apparent reason. I could name a person, and to appearance a reputable tradesman, who, in the company of his friends, in the hearing of one of my late congregation at Birmingham, but without knowing him to be such, declared that, in case of any disturbance, they would immediately come to Hackney, evidently for the purpose of mischief. In this state of things, it is not to be wondered at, that of many servants who were recommended to me, and some that were actually hired, very few could, for a long time, be prevailed upon to live with me.

These facts not only shew how general was the idea of my particular insecurity in this country; but what is of much more consequence, and highly interesting to the country at large, an idea of the general disposition to rioting and violence that prevails in it, and that the Dissenters are the objects of it. Mr. Pitt very justly observed, in his speech on the subject of the riots in Birmingham, that it was "the effervescence of the public mind." Indeed the effervescible matter has existed in this country ever since the civil wars in the time of Charles I. and it was particularly apparent in the reign of queen Ann. But the power of government under the former princes  
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of the House of Hanover prevented its doing any mischief. The late events shew that this power is no longer exerted as it used to be, but that, on the contrary, there prevails an idea, well or ill founded, that tumultuary proceedings against Dissenters will not receive any effectual discouragement. After what has taken place with respect to Birmingham, all idea of much hazard for insulting and abusing the Dissenters is entirely vanished; whereas the disposition to injure the Catholics was effectually checked by the proceedings of the year 1780. From that time *they* have been safe, and I rejoice in it. But from the year 1791, the Dissenters have been more exposed to insult and outrage than ever.

Having fixed myself at Clapton; unhinged as I had been, and having lost the labour of several years; yet flattering myself that I should end my days here, I took a long lease of my house, and expended a considerable sum in improving it. I also determined, with the assistance of my friends, to resume my philosophical and other pursuits; and after an interruption amounting to about two years, it was with a pleasure that I cannot describe, that I entered my new laboratory, and began the most common preparatory processes, with a view to some original inquiries. With what success I have laboured, the public has already in some measure seen, and may see more hereafter.

But though I did not choose (notwithstanding I found myself exposed to continual insult) to leave my native country, I found it necessary to provide for my sons elsewhere. My eldest son was settled in a business,



business, which promised to be very advantageous, at Manchester; but his partner, though a man of liberality himself, informed him, on perceiving the general prevalence of the spirit which produced the riots in Birmingham, that, owing to his relationship to *me*, he was under the necessity of proposing a separation, which accordingly took place.

On this he had an invitation to join another connexion, in a business in which the spirit of party could not have much affected him; but he declined it. And after he had been present at the assizes at Warwick, he conceived such an idea of this country, that I do not believe that any proposal, however advantageous, would have induced him to continue in it; so much was he affected on perceiving his father treated as I had been.

Determining to go to America, where he had no prospect but that of being a farmer, he wished to spend a short time with a person who has greatly distinguished himself in that way, and one who from his own general principles, and his friendship for myself, would have given him the best advice and assistance in his power. He, however, declined it, and acknowledged some time after, that had it been known, as it must have been, to his landlord, that he had a son of *mine* with him, he feared he should have been turned out of his farm.

My second son, who was present both at the riot, and the assizes, felt more indignation still, and willingly listened to a proposal to settle in France; and there his reception was but too flattering. However,

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on the breaking out of the war with this country, all mercantile prospects being suspended, he wished to go to America. There his eldest and youngest brother have joined him, and they are now looking out for a settlement, having as yet no fixed views.

The necessity I was under of sending my sons out of this country, was my principal inducement to send the little property that I had out of it too; so that I had nothing in England besides my library, apparatus, and household goods. By this, I felt myself greatly relieved, it being of little consequence where a man already turned sixty ends his days. Whatever good or evil I have been capable of, is now chiefly done; and I trust that the same consciousness of integrity, which has supported me hitherto, will carry me through any thing that may yet be reserved for me. Seeing, however, no great prospect of doing much good, or having much enjoyment, here, I am now preparing to follow my sons; hoping to be of some use to them in their present unsettled state, and that Providence may yet, advancing in years as I am, find me some sphere of usefulness along with them.

As to the great odium that I have incurred, the charge of *sedition*, or my being an enemy to the constitution or peace of my country, is a mere pretence for it; though it has been so much urged, that it is now generally believed, and all attempts to deceive the public with respect to it avail nothing at all. The whole course of my studies, from early life, shews how little *politics* of any kind have been my object. Indeed to have written so much as I have

have in *theology*, and to have done so much in *experimental philosophy*, and at the same time to have had my mind occupied, as it is supposed to have been, with factious politics, I must have had faculties more than human. Let any person only cast his eye over the long list of my publications, and he will see that they relate almost wholly to theology, philosophy, or general literature.

I did, however, when I was a younger man, and before it was in my power to give much attention to philosophical pursuits, write a small anonymous political pamphlet, on the *State of Liberty in this Country*, about the time of Mr. Wilkes's election for Middlesex, which gained me the acquaintance, and I may say the friendship, of Sir George Savile, and which I had the happiness to enjoy as long as he lived.

At the request also of Dr. Franklin and Dr. Fothergill, I wrote an address to the Dissenters on the subject of the approaching rupture with America, a pamphlet which Sir George Savile, and my other friends, circulated in great numbers, and it was thought with some effect.

After this I entirely ceased to write any thing on the subject of politics, except as far as the business of the *Test Act*, and of *Civil Establishments of Religion*, had a connexion with politics. And though, at the recommendation of Dr. Price, I was presently after this taken into the family of the Marquis of Lansdowne, and I entered into almost all his views, as thinking them just and liberal, I never wrote a single pamphlet,

pamphlet, or even a paragraph in a newspaper, all the time that I was with him, which was seven years.

I never preached a political sermon in my life, unless such as, I believe, all Dissenters usually preach on the fifth of November, in favour of *civil and religious liberty*, may be said to be political. And on these occasions, I am confident, that I never advanced any sentiment but such as, till of late years, would have tended to recommend, rather than render me obnoxious, to those who direct the administration of this country. And the doctrines which I adopted when young, and which were even popular then (except with the clergy, who were at that time generally disaffected to the family on the throne) I cannot abandon, merely because the times are so changed, that they are now become unpopular, and the expression and communication of them hazardous.

Farther, though I by no means disapprove of societies for political information, such as are now every where discountenanced, and generally suppressed, I never was a member of any of them; nor; indeed, did I ever attend any public meeting, if I could decently avoid it, owing to habits acquired in studious and retired life.

From a mistake of my talents and disposition, I was invited by many of the departments in France, to represent them in the present National Convention, after I had been made a citizen of France, on account of my being considered as one who had been persecuted for my attachment to the cause of liberty here. But though the invitation was repeated with

the most flattering importunity, I never hesitated about declining it.

I can farther say with respect to politics, concerning which I believe every Englishman has some opinion or other (and at present, owing to the peculiar nature of the present war, it is almost the only topic of general conversation) that, except in company, I hardly ever think of the subject, my reading, meditation, and writing, being almost wholly engrossed by theology, and philosophy; and of late, as for many years before the riots in Birmingham, I have spent a very great proportion of my time, as my friends well know, in my laboratory.

If, then, my real crime has not been *sedition*, or *treason*, what has it been? For every *effect* must have some adequate *cause*, and therefore the odium that I have incurred must have been owing to something in my declared sentiments, or conduct, that has exposed me to it. In my own opinion, it cannot have been any thing but my open hostility to the doctrines of the established church, and more especially to all civil establishments of religion whatever. This has brought upon me the implacable resentment of the great body of the clergy; and they have found other methods of opposing me besides *argument*, and that use of the *press* which is equally open to us all. They have also found an able ally and champion in Mr. Burke, who (without any provocation except that of answering his book on the French Revolution) has taken several opportunities of inveighing against me, in a place where he knows

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I cannot reply to him, and from which he also knows that his accusation will reach every corner of the country, and consequently thousands of persons, who will never read any writings of mine\*. They have had another, and still more effectual vehicle of their abuse in what are called the *treasury newspapers*, and other popular publications.

By these and other means, the same party spirit which was the cause of the riots in Birmingham, has been increasing ever since, especially in that neighbourhood; a remarkable instance of which may be seen in a *Letter* addressed, but not sent, to me from *Mr. Foley, rector of Stourbridge*, who acknowledges the satisfaction that he and his brethren have received from one of the grossest and coarsest pieces of abuse of me that has yet appeared, which, as a curious specimen of the kind, I inserted in the *Appendix of my Appeal*, and in which I am represented as no better than Guy Fawkes, or the devil himself. This very Christian divine recommends to the members of the established church to decline all commercial dealings with Dissenters, as an effectual method of exterminating them. *Defoe's Shortest Way with the*

\* Mr. Burke having said in the House of Commons, that "I was made a citizen of France on account of my declared hostility to the constitution of this country," I, in the public papers, denied the charge, and called upon him for the proofs of it. As he made no reply, in the preface to my First Sermon of the last year, I said, p. 9, that "it sufficiently appeared that he had neither ability to maintain his charge, nor virtue to retract it." A year more of silence on his part having now elapsed, this is become more evident than before.

*Dissenters,*

*Dissenters*\*, would have taught him a more effectual method still. And yet this Mr. Foley, whom I never saw, and who could not have had any particular cause of enmity to me, had, like Mr. Madan of Birmingham, a character for liberality. What, then, have we to expect from others, when we find so much bigotry and rancour in such men as these?

Many times, by the encouragement of persons from whom better things might have been expected, I have been burned in effigy along with Mr. Paine; and numberless insulting and threatening letters have been sent to me from all parts of the kingdom. It is not possible for any man to have conducted himself more peaceably than I have done all the time that I have lived at Clapton, yet it has not exempted me not only from the worst suspicions, but very gross insults. A very friendly and innocent club, which I found in the place, has been considered as *Jacobine* chiefly on my account; and at one time there was cause of apprehension that I should have been brought into danger for lending one of Mr. Paine's books. But with some difficulty the neighbourhood was satisfied that I was innocent.

As nothing had been paid to me on account of damages in the riot, when I published the second part of my *Appeal* to the public on the subject, it may be proper to say, that it was paid some time in the beginning of the year 1793, with interest only from the first of January of the same year, though the injury was received in July, 1791; when equity

\* A tract written in a grave ironical stile, advising to hang them all.  
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evidently required, that it ought to have been allowed from the time of the riot, especially as, in all the cases, the allowance was far short of the loss. In my case it fell short, as I have shewn, not less than two thousand pounds. And the losses sustained by the other sufferers far exceeded mine. Public justice also required that, if the forms of law, local enmity, or any other cause, had prevented our receiving full indemnification, it should have been made up to us from the public treasury; the great end of all civil government being protection from violence, or an indemnification for it. Whatever we might in equity claim, the country owes us, and, if it be just, will some time or other pay, and with interest.

I would farther observe, that since, in a variety of cases, money is allowed where the injury is not of a pecuniary nature, merely because no other compensation can be given, the same should have been done with respect to me, on account of the destruction of my manuscripts, the interruption of my pursuits, the loss of a pleasing and advantageous situation, &c. &c. and had the injury been sustained by a *clergyman*, he would, I doubt not, have claimed, and been allowed, very large damages on this account. So far, however, was there any idea of the kind in my favour, that my counsel advised me to make no mention of my manuscript *Lectures on the Constitution and Laws of England*, a work about as large as that of Blackstone (as may be seen by the syllabus of the particular lectures, sixty-three in all, published in the first edition of my *Essay on a Course of liberal Education*



tion for civil and active Life) because it would be taken for granted that they were of seditious nature; and would therefore have been of disservice to me with the jury. Accordingly they were, in the account of my losses, included in the article of so much paper. After these losses, had I had nothing but the justice of my country to look to, I must have sunk under the burden, incapable of any farther exertions. It was the seasonable generosity of my friends that prevented this, and put it in my power, though with the unavoidable loss of near two years, to resume my former pursuits.

A farther proof of the excessive bigotry of this country is, that, though the clergy of Birmingham, resenting what I advanced in the first part of my *Appeal*, replied to it, and pledged themselves to go through with the enquiry along with me, till the whole truth should be investigated, they have made no reply to the *Second Part of my Appeal*, in which I brought specific charges against themselves, and other persons by name, proving them to have been the promoters and abettors of the riot; and yet they have as much respect shewn to them as ever, and the country at large pays no attention to it. Had the clergy been the injured persons, and Dissenters the rioters, unable to answer the charges brought against them, so great would have been the general indignation at their conduct, that I am persuaded it would not have been possible for them to continue in the country.

I could, if I were so disposed, give my readers

many more instances of the bigotry of the clergy of the church of England with respect to me, which could not fail to excite, in generous minds, equal indignation and contempt; but I forbear. Had I, however, foreseen what I am now witness to, I certainly should not have made any attempt to replace my library or apparatus, and I soon repented of having done it. But this being done, I was willing to make some use of both before another interruption of my pursuits. I began to philosophize, and make experiments, rather late in life, being near forty, for want of the necessary means of doing any thing in this way; and my pursuits have been much interrupted by removals (never indeed chosen by myself, but rendered necessary by circumstances) and my time being now short, I hoped to have had no occasion for more than one, and that a final, remove. But the circumstances above mentioned have induced me, though with great and sincere regret, to undertake another, and to a greater distance than any that I have hitherto made.

I profess not to be unmoved by the aspect of things exhibited in this Discourse. But notwithstanding this, I should willingly have awaited my fate in my native country, whatever it had been, if I had not had sons in America, and if I did not think that field of public usefulness, which is evidently closing upon me here, might open to more advantage here.

I also own that I am not unaffected by such unexampled punishments as those of Mr. Muir and my

friend Mr. Palmer, for offences, which, if, in the eye of reason, they be any at all, are slight, and very insufficiently proved; a measure so subversive of that freedom of speaking and acting, which has hitherto been the great pride of Britons. But the sentence of Mr. Winterbottom, for delivering from the pulpit what I am persuaded he never did deliver, and which, similar evidence might have drawn upon myself, or any other dissenting minister, who was an object of general dislike, has something in it still more alarming\*. But I trust that conscious innocence

\* I trust that the friends of liberty, especially among the Dissenters, will not fail to do every thing in their power to make Mr. Winterbottom's confinement, and also the sufferings of Mr. Palmer and his companions, as easy to them as possible. Having been assisted in a season of persecution myself, I should be very ill deserving of the favours I have received, if I was not particularly desirous of recommending such cases as theirs to general consideration. Here difference in religious sentiment is least of all to be attended to. On the contrary, let those who in this respect differ the most from Mr. Winterbottom, which is my own case, exert themselves the most in his favour. When men of unquestionable integrity and piety suffer in consequence of acting (as such persons always will do) from a principle of *conscience*, they must command respect even of their enemies, if they also act from principle, though they be thereby led to proceed in an opposite direction.

The case of men of education and reflection (and who act from the best intentions with respect to the community) committing what only *state policy* requires to be considered as *crimes*, but which are allowed on all hands to imply no moral turpitude, so as to render them unfit for heaven and happiness hereafter, is not to be confounded with that of common felons. There was nothing in the conduct of Louis XIV. and his ministers, that appeared so shocking, so contrary to all ideas of justice, humanity and decency, and that has contributed more to render their memory

cence would support me as it does him, under whatever prejudiced and violent men might *do* to me, as well as *say* of me. But I see no occasion to expose myself to danger without any prospect of doing good, or to continue any longer in a country in which I am so unjustly become the object of general dislike, and not retire to another, where I have reason to think I shall be better received. And I trust that the same good Providence which has attended me hitherto, and made me happy in my present situation, and all my former ones, will attend and bless me in what may still be before me. In all events, *The will of God be done.*

I cannot refrain from repeating again, that I leave my native country with real regret, never expecting to find any where else society so suited to my disposition and habits, such friends as I have here (whose attachment has been more than a balance to all the abuse I have met with from others) and especially to replace one particular Christian friend, in whose absence I shall, for some time at least, find all the world a blank. Still less can I expect to resume my favourite pursuits, with any thing like the advantages I enjoy here. In leaving this country I also abandon a source of maintenance, which I can but ill bear to lose. I can, however, truly say, that I

more execrated, than sending such men as Mr. Marolles, and other eminent Protestants, who are now revered as saints and martyrs, to the galleys, along with the vilest miscreants. Compared with this, the punishment of death would be mercy. I trust that, in time, the Scots in general will think these measures a disgrace to their country.

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leave it without any resentment, or ill will. On the contrary, I sincerely wish my countrymen all happiness; and when the time for reflection (which my absence may accelerate) shall come, my countrymen, I am confident, will do me more justice. They will be convinced that every suspicion they have been led to entertain to my disadvantage has been ill founded, and that I have even some claims to their gratitude and esteem. In this case, I shall look with satisfaction to the time when, if my life be prolonged, I may visit my friends in this country; and perhaps I may, notwithstanding my removal for the present, find a grave (as I believe is naturally the wish of every man) in the land that gave me birth.

# FAST SERMON,

FEBRUARY 28, 1794.

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REPENT YE, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT  
HAND! MATT. iii. 2.

**T**HIS was the great burden of the preaching of both John the Baptist and of our Saviour. But as *that kingdom of heaven*, the approach of which they announced, and which, by our Saviour's direction, is the subject of our daily prayers, is not yet come, but much nearer than it was in their time, there must be a greater propriety in urging this exhortation at present, than there has ever yet been. It is nothing but repentance that can prepare sinful men (and all men are more or less sinners) to derive any advantage from this kingdom, in which Christ and the saints shall bear rule; that new state of the heavens and of the earth, in which *righteousness* only will dwell. And being a second time called upon by our rulers to humble ourselves before God, on account of the calamities we already feel, and those that we have reason to fear, and repentance being

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the only means of averting his anger, and procuring a cessation, or mitigation, of his heavy judgments, I shall take this opportunity of urging it, from that very critical and truly alarming situation, in which almost the whole of Europe now finds itself, and this country of ours, as having most at stake, perhaps more than any other.

If we can learn any thing concerning what is before us, from the language of prophecy, great calamities, such as the world has never yet experienced, will precede that happy state of things, in which 'the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ;' and these calamities will chiefly affect those nations which have been the seat of the great antichristian power; or, as all Protestants, and I believe justly, suppose, have been subject to the see of Rome. And it appears to me highly probable, as I hinted in my last discourse on this occasion, that the present disturbances in Europe are the beginning of those very calamitous times. I therefore think there is a call for unusual seriousness, and attention to the course of Divine Providence, that when 'the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants thereof may learn righteousness,' so as to be prepared for whatever events the now rapid wheels of time may disclose. Let us then, my brethren, make a serious pause. Let us look back to the antient prophecies, and compare them with the present state of things around us, and let us then look to ourselves, to our

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own sentiments and conduct, that we may feel and act as our peculiar circumstances require.

The future happy state of the world, when the Jews shall be restored to their own country, and be at the head of all the nations of the earth, was first distinctly mentioned by Isaiah, and other prophets who were nearly cotemporary with him; but it was first denominated *the kingdom of heaven*, and announced as to be administered by *the Son of Man*, or *the Messiah*, by Daniel. It was, however, by other prophets, given to a descendant of David. All Christians consider Jesus as this descendant of David, or the promised Messiah. The mistake which the Jews were under, arose from their wholly overlooking the suffering state of the Messiah, and imagining that his *first* coming would be that mentioned by Daniel, *in the clouds of heaven*; and consequently that his kingdom would commence on his first appearance.

Jesus, knowing himself to be the Messiah, never denied that, at a proper time, he would appear as a king; nor could there have been at that time any uncertainty about the meaning of the term *king*. When Pilate asked Jesus if he was a king, he acknowledged it, and added that he was sent to bear witness to *that*, as well as to other truths; though, to obviate the jealousy of Pilate, and the Roman government, he said that his kingdom was *not of this world*; so that it did not interfere with the governments which then existed in the world, being that



*kingdom of heaven* which was to take place hereafter, and to be exercised upon maxims very different from those of the then existing kingdoms.

Jesus also said that, when he should reign, his apostles would reign with him, and that they should 'sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' Paul also said, that 'the saints shall judge the world.' And it is remarkable that, in the original prophecy of Daniel, the administration of this kingdom of heaven is not said to be wholly confined to one person, but to be extended to many, Dan. vii. 18. 'The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever; ver. 27. 'And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve, and obey him,' or rather, 'obey it.'

That this will be a proper *kingdom*, though a kingdom of righteousness, the object of which will be the happiness of the subjects of it, is farther evident from the other kingdoms which are to be overthrown in order to make way for it. For had it been that purely *spiritual kingdom* which some suppose, what occasion was there for the destruction of the other kingdoms; since they would not have interfered with it, but might have subsisted at the same time?

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In the first vision of Nebuchadnezzar, interpreted by Daniel, this future kingdom of heaven is represented by 'a little stone, cut out of a mountain without hands,' which *smote* the image representing the preceding kingdoms, Dan. ii. 34. and 'brake it to pieces,' when itself 'became a great mountain, filling the whole earth.' In the interpretation of this vision, ver. 44, it is said, 'In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever; evidently in the place of the other kingdoms. It is, therefore, an institution adapted to answer the purpose of them, but in a much better manner.

This kingdom, however, a kingdom of truth and righteousness, will not be established without the greatest convulsions, and the violent overthrow of other kingdoms. Every description, figurative or otherwise, of this great revolution, clearly implies violence, and consequently great calamity. The little stone *smiting* the image, and *breaking it in pieces*, is far from giving an idea of a peaceable revolution, but one that will be effected with great violence, and in a short time. The following language is peculiarly emphatical. 'Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold,' (all the materials of which the image consisted) 'broken to pieces together, and became as the chaff of the summer floor,

‘ floor, and the wind carried them away, and no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.’ In the interpretation it is said, ver. 44, ‘ that this new kingdom shall break in pieces, and consume all the other kingdoms.’

The same awful conclusion may be drawn from the language used in the corresponding vision of Daniel himself, in the first year of Belshazzar, in which the four great empires, which in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream had been represented by the *four metals*, of which the image that he saw consisted, are represented by *four beasts*, and the last of them is said (Dan. vii. 11) not to die a natural death, but *to be slain*, and moreover, his *body destroyed, and given to the burning flame*. As, in the former vision, the ten kingdoms, into which the last, or the Roman empire was to be divided, were represented by the ten toes of the image; in this vision of Daniel they are represented by the ten horns of the last beast. These are said to be ten kingdoms, or thrones, and these thrones are said to be *cast down*, Dan. vii. 9. clearly implying violence in their dissolution.

In the language of prophecy, great, and especially sudden revolutions, in kingdoms and states, are frequently represented by *earthquakes*; and also the supreme powers on earth by the sun, moon, and stars. And, in agreement with the preceding view, suggested by Daniel, the prophet Haggai, who wrote after him, to comfort his countrymen in their low  
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and distressed circumstances, and gloomy prospects, when they were erecting a poor and contemptible temple, compared with that of Solomon, assures them, that the glory of the *latter house*, meaning, I am persuaded, not the house they were then building, for that was taken down by Herod; nor yet that of Herod, but the *last* house, the glorious temple described by Ezekiel, as to be built after the return of the Jews to their own country, should be greater than that of the former house built by Solomon. Haggai describes the great revolution that is to precede it in the following manner. Hag. ii. 6.  
‘ For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Yet once it is a  
‘ little while, and I will shake the heavens and the  
‘ earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will  
‘ shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall  
‘ come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the  
‘ Lord of Hosts. The glory of this latter house shall  
‘ be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord  
‘ of Hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith  
‘ the Lord of Hosts.’ What can be this *peace*, but the future peaceful and happy state of the world under the Messiah? and what can be this *shaking of the nations*, that is to precede it, but great convulsions, and sudden revolutions, such as we see now beginning to take place?

The last great power that is foretold, as to arise among the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire is to be divided, is represented by the *little horn*, which is said to arise after the ten, signifying, I

doubt not, the Papal power. It is said, Dan. vii. 20,  
 ‘ to have eyes, and a mouth that spake very great  
 ‘ things, whose look was more stout than his fellows,  
 ‘ which made war with the saints, and prevailed  
 ‘ against them, until the antient of days came, and  
 ‘ judgment was given to the saints of the Most High,  
 ‘ and the time came that the saints possessed the  
 ‘ kingdom.’ This power, in the interpretation of  
 the vision, is said to be one that should ‘ speak great  
 ‘ words against the Most High, and to wear out the  
 ‘ saints of the Most High, and to think to change  
 ‘ times and laws.’ It is added, ‘ They shall be given  
 ‘ into his hand until a time, and times, and the di-  
 ‘ viding of time,’ the very period for the duration  
 of the great antichristian power in the Revelation.

When the termination of this last power is de-  
 scribed, it is said, ver. 26, ‘ The judgment shall sit,  
 ‘ and they shall take away his dominion, to consume  
 ‘ and to destroy it unto the end,’ which clearly im-  
 plies nothing of a peaceable nature, but something  
 exceedingly violent and calamitous.

This is, no doubt, the same awful period that is  
 spoken of in the last chapter of Daniel, ch. xii. ver. 1.  
 ‘ And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great  
 ‘ prince which standeth for the children of thy peo-  
 ‘ ple, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as  
 ‘ never was since there was a nation, even to that  
 ‘ same time; and at that time thy people shall be  
 ‘ delivered, every one that shall be found written in  
 ‘ the book. And many of them that sleep in the  
 ‘ dust

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‘dust of the earth shall awake.’ For that the resurrection, at least in part, will take place at the commencement of this great period, is agreeable to the uniform language of scripture on the subject.

All the prophecies in the New Testament concerning the fall of Antichrist, and the commencement of the proper kingdom of heaven, and of Christ, exactly correspond with those which I have quoted from the Old Testament. The second coming of Christ is represented by the apostle Paul, 2 Thes. i. 7, as an event exceedingly awful, and dreadful to the wicked. ‘He will be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God.’

That the great antichristian power is to be destroyed at this second coming of Christ, and not properly before, and therefore that its final destruction will be sudden, is evident from what the same apostle says afterwards, 2 Thes. ii. 8. ‘Then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish;’ characters sufficiently evident of the church of Rome.

The account that is given, in the book of Revelation, of the commencement of the last great period, signified by the blowing of the *seventh trumpet*,  
when

when the kingdoms of the earth are to become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ, Rev. ii. 15, is immediately preceded by the third, and probably far the greatest of the *three woes*, the first of which was occasioned by the conquests of the Saracens, and the second by those of the Turks, as the order of the events described under the preceding trumpets evidently implies. And the state of things at this time is described in the following emphatical language of the four and twenty elders, who are said, on this occasion, to fall on their faces, and to worship God, Rev. xi. 17. ‘ We give thee thanks, O Lord God  
 ‘ Almighty, who art, and wast, and art to come, be-  
 ‘ cause thou hast taken to thee thy great power and  
 ‘ hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy  
 ‘ wrath is come, and the time of the dead that they  
 ‘ must be judged, and that thou shouldest give re-  
 ‘ ward to thy servants the prophets, and shouldest  
 ‘ destroy them that destroy the earth \*.’

We have here a wonderful concurrence of great events, and among these is the *anger of the nations*, followed by the *destruction of them that have destroyed the earth*. Now how has the earth been destroyed by the men who *have* destroyed it, but by desolating wars, and the destruction that has thereby been made of mankind? In like manner, then, may we con-

\* On this subject I refer my readers to two sermons lately published by the Rev. Elkanan Winchester, entitled *The Three Woe Trumpets*, deserving the serious consideration of all Christians, who are attentive to the *signs of the times*.

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clude that those destructive powers will themselves be destroyed, probably by one another, in those *wars* which the apostle James says arise from *men's lusts*, the lust of ambition and revenge. And when, my brethren, have we seen, or heard of, such anger and rage in nations, such violence in carrying on war, and such destruction of men, as at this very time? It is thought that the last campaign only has destroyed many more men than all the eight years of the American war, and probably more than the long war before it; and from the increased armaments of the belligerent powers, and their increasing animosity, it is probable that the approaching campaign will be more bloody than the last.

What has more eminently contributed to destroy the earth, than the antichristian and idolatrous ecclesiastical establishments of Christianity, that have subsisted in these western parts of the world; many more persons having been destroyed by Christians, as they have called themselves, than by Heathens? And do we not see one, and one of the principal, of those establishments already, and completely, destroyed?

A more highly wrought picture of the destruction and slaughter of men, that will precede this glorious period in which 'God will take to himself his great power and reign,' we find in the 19th chapter of the Revelation, which describes the triumph of the saints on the occasion. 'After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying,



' saying, Alleluia, Salvation, and glory, and honour,  
 ' and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and  
 ' right are his judgments. For he hath judged the  
 ' great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her  
 ' fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his ser-  
 ' vants at her hand.' That this has a connexion with  
 the second coming of Christ, appears from what im-  
 mediately follows, ver. 11. ' And I saw heaven open-  
 ' ed, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon  
 ' him was called faithful and true, and in righteous-  
 ' ness he shall judge and make war. His eyes were  
 ' as a flame of fire, and on his head were many  
 ' crowns, and he had a name written which no man  
 ' knew but he himself. And he was clothed in a  
 ' vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called  
 ' THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies which were  
 ' in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed  
 ' in fine linen, white and clean; and out of his mouth  
 ' goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite  
 ' the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of  
 ' iron, and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierce-  
 ' ness of the wrath of Almighty God. And he hath  
 ' on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written,  
 ' KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.'

That there will be literally great slaughter of  
 men on the occasion, is clearly indicated in what  
 follows, figurative and hyperbolical as the language  
 is, ver. 17. ' And I saw an angel standing in the sun,  
 ' and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the  
 ' fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and  
 ' gather

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‘gather yourselves together, unto the supper of the  
‘great God, that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and  
‘the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men,  
‘and the flesh of horses, and them that sit on them,  
‘and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both  
‘small and great.’

The same is evident from the account of the  
pouring out of the third vial, Rev. xvi. 14, &c.

‘And the third angel poured out his vial on the ri-  
‘vers and fountains of water, and they became  
‘blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say,  
‘Thou art righteous, O Lord, who art, and wast,  
‘and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For  
‘they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,  
‘and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they  
‘are worthy.’

That this great slaughter will be made on the de-  
struction of the antichristian power, called in this  
book *the beast*, supported by *the kings of the earth*, is  
evident from the next verses, ver. 19. ‘And I saw  
‘the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their  
‘armies, gathered together, to make war against him  
‘that sat on the horse, and against his army. And  
‘the beast was taken, and with him the false pro-  
‘phet, that wrought miracles before him, with which  
‘he deceived them that had received the mark of  
‘the beast, and them that worshipped his image.  
‘These were both cast alive into a lake of fire  
‘burning with brimstone. And the remnant were  
‘slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse,

‘ which sword proceeded out of his mouth, and all  
 ‘ the fowls were filled with their flesh.’

After this follows the description of the millennium;  
 chap. xx. ver. 4: ‘ And I saw thrones, and they sat  
 ‘ upon them, and judgment was given unto them;  
 ‘ and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded  
 ‘ for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God,  
 ‘ and which had not worshipped the beast, neither  
 ‘ his image, neither had received his mark upon  
 ‘ their forehead, or in their hands, and they lived and  
 ‘ reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest  
 ‘ of the dead lived not again until the thousand years  
 ‘ were finished. This is the first resurrection. Bless-  
 ‘ sed and holy is he that hath part in the first resur-  
 ‘ rection. On such the second death hath no power,  
 ‘ but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ,  
 ‘ and they shall reign with him a thousand  
 ‘ years.’

To me it appears not improbable, that several  
 circumstances in our Saviour's prophecy concerning  
 the destruction of Jerusalem, and the desolation of  
 Judea, relate to this great and more distant period.  
 For it was delivered in answer to a question put to  
 him by his disciples, which respected both the events,  
 on the idea of their being coincident. ‘ Tell us,’ say  
 they, Matt. xxiv. 3, ‘ when shall these things be,  
 ‘ and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of  
 ‘ the end of the age.’ In answer to this, he says,  
 first, as it is in Luke, whose account in this case  
 seems to be the most orderly and distinct of any,  
 ‘ chap.

chap xxi. ver. 9. ' But when ye shall hear of wars,  
' and commotions, be not terrified ; for these things  
' must first come to pass, but the end is not by and  
' by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise  
' against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and  
' great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and fa-  
' mines, and pestilences; and fearful sights, and great  
' signs shall there be from heaven. But before all  
' these they shall lay their hands on you, and perse-  
' cute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and  
' into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers  
' for my name's sake.'

I am the more inclined to think that some things  
in this prediction have this farther reference, because  
in them Jesus expressly quotes the language of Da-  
niel recited above, which unquestionably has this  
reference ; as when he says, Mat. xxix. 20. ' There  
' shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the  
' beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever  
' shall be: And except those days should be short-  
' ened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the  
' elect's sake those days shall be shortened.'

It seems still more evident that this prediction ad-  
mits of this interpretation, from what follows, which  
exactly corresponds to the more antient prophecies:  
Mat. xxiv. 29. ' Immediately after the tribulation of  
' those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon  
' not give her light, and the stars shall fall from  
' heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be  
' shaken;' which are almost the very words of the  
prophet

prophet Haggai quoted above. ‘And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. And they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’

That this great tribulation was a distant event, and did not respect the Jews, but the Gentiles, is probable from Jesus calling it, Luke xxi. 25, ‘the distress of nations,’ or ‘the nations,’ i. e. the ‘Gentiles,’ ‘men’s hearts,’ he subjoins, ‘failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. For the powers of heaven shall be shaken,’ that is, there will be great convulsions, and violent revolutions, in kingdoms and states; ‘And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in clouds, with power and great glory.’

That this tribulation is coincident with that which is to precede the restoration of the Jews, is probable from his saying immediately before, ver. 24. ‘Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,’ that is, till it shall come to be their turn to be punished; the destruction of the Gentiles, who had oppressed the Jews, commencing with the restoration of that highly favoured nation.

Jesus farther says, Luke xxi. 22. ‘These be the days of vengeance, that all the things which are written

written may be fulfilled.' Now the only days of vengeance particularly announced by the antient prophets, to which Jesus here alludes, relate to the judgments of God upon the Gentiles who had hewn enmity to the Jews, and especially in their opposition to their re-settlement in their own country.

There is nothing more clear in the whole compass of prophecy, as I have shewn on another occasion, than that after the destined period for the dispersion and calamities of the Jews, the heaviest of all the divine judgments will fall upon those nations by whom they shall have been oppressed; and this will involve almost all the nations of the world, but more especially those of these western parts, which have been subject first to the Roman empire, and then to the empire of Rome.

Moses says, Deut. xxx. 7. 'The Lord thy God will put all these curses' (those which were threatened to fall upon them) 'upon thine enemies, and upon them that hate thee, and persecute thee.' Isa. liii. 25. 'I will contend with them that contend with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine, and all flesh shall know that I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.' Zeph. iii. 19. 'Behold at that time I will undo all that afflict thee.' Jer. xx. 11. 'Though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not

‘make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure.’ Ezekiel, speaking of the happy times that will take place on the restoration of the Jews, says, chap. xxviii. ver. 26. ‘Yea they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them, and they shall know that I am Jehovah their God.’ Lastly, Zechariah says, chap. xii. ver. 9. ‘It shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.’

That there is to be a day of visitation for all the nations in this part of the world (all of whom have distinguished themselves so by their oppression and massacre of the Jews) will now, I presume, be sufficiently apparent, if there be any truth in prophecy. You will therefore naturally ask, if there be any ground for thinking, that those judgments are now about to take place; if so, how long they will probably continue, and when will be the commencement of the glorious and happy times that are to follow.

That those great troubles, so frequently mentioned in the antient prophecies, are now commencing, I do own I strongly suspect, as I intimated the last time that I addressed you on this occasion; and the events of the last year have contributed to strengthen that suspicion; the storm, however, may still blow over for the present, and the great scene of calamity be reserved for some future time, though I cannot think it will be deferred long.

As to the precise time when the scene of calamity will

will terminate, and the proper kingdom of Christ will commence, he himself did not know, either before his death and resurrection, or afterwards. When he was questioned on the subject, he expressly said, Mark xiii. 32, 'But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.' When, after his resurrection, the disciples asked him, saying, Acts i. 6. 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' he replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.' It is enough for us to know the certainty of these great events, that our faith may not fail on the approach of the predicted calamity, confident that it will have the happiest issue in God's own time. For the same Being who foretold the evil which we shall see come to pass, has likewise foretold the good that is to follow it.

That the second coming of Christ will be coincident with the commencement of the millennium, or the future peaceable and happy state of the world (which, according to all the prophecies, will take place after the restoration of the Jews) is evident from what Peter said, in his address to the Jews, on the occasion of his healing the lame man at the gate of the temple, Acts iii. 19. 'Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus



‘ Christ, who before was preached unto you, whom  
 ‘ the heavens must receive until the times of the  
 ‘ restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by  
 ‘ the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world  
 ‘ began.’ Now nothing is more evident than that  
 the only period that can be called the time of the  
*restitution of all things*, or the paradisaical and happy  
 state of the world, foretold by the antient prophets,  
 will follow the restoration of the Jews to their own  
 country. This, and nothing else, is the great burden  
 of all antient prophecy.

That this will be a joyful event to the Jewish  
 nation, when they will be convinced, perhaps by his  
 personal appearance among them, that he is their  
 promised Messiah, actually coming in the clouds of  
 heaven, appears from what our Saviour himself says,  
 Mat. xxi. 9. Luke xiii. 35. ‘ Verily I say unto you,  
 ‘ ye shall not see me until the time come when ye  
 ‘ shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of  
 ‘ the Lord;’ the very cry at which the Scribes and  
 Pharisees were so much offended in the children,  
 when Jesus entered Jerusalem. This very cry would  
 then be that of the whole nation.

But though our Saviour could not fix the time of  
 his second coming, or the commencement of his  
 proper kingdom, he sufficiently forewarned his disci-  
 ples of the signs of its approach, and of some circum-  
 stances that will immediately precede it, to which it  
 certainly behoves us to be attentive.

Before this great event the gospel is to be preach-

ed to all the world. Mat. xxiv. 14. ‘And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached through all the world, for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come.’ If by the whole world, we mean the Roman empire, this was accomplished before the destruction of Jerusalem, and therefore may refer to that event. But it may have a farther reference, and now there is hardly any nation that has not had an opportunity of having the gospel preached to them; and the late wonderful extension of navigation, by which the whole of the habitable world has been explored by Christians, though this was by no means the object of the navigators, will, no doubt, be the means of carrying the knowledge of the gospel to a greater extent than ever; and the troubles of Europe will greatly contribute to the same end. Times of trouble make men serious. With these serious impressions on their minds many will fly to distant countries, and carry the knowledge of the gospel with them; and, it may be hoped, in greater purity, and consequently more worthy of their acceptance, than it has hitherto appeared to them.

Another preceding event, and of a more definite kind, is the great prevalence of infidelity, Luke xviii. 8. ‘When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth.’ Now the prevalence of infidelity of late years has been very remarkable in all countries in which antichristian hierarchies have been established. And certainly all civil establishments of Christianity, in which power is claimed to prescribe

articles of faith, to make laws to bind the consciences of Christians, and inflict temporal punishments for the violation of them, are properly antichristian. For, as Christians, we are commanded to acknowledge no man master upon earth, since one is our master, even Christ.

Moreover, such absurd doctrines have been established by human authority, and such horrid punishments have been inflicted upon men for obeying the dictates of conscience, under all those hierarchies, protestant ones not excepted, that the minds of men have revolted at them; and, shocked at such enormities, have thrown off the belief and profession of Christianity altogether. This was long ago the case in Italy, where the enormities of the court of Rome were the most conspicuous; and many of the cardinals, and some of the popes themselves, are well known to have been unbelievers.

That this has long been the case in France, is what no person acquainted with that country the last fifty years will deny. It is now become more generally known, because it has had a better opportunity of shewing itself. That, in similar circumstances, the same, or something approaching to it, would not appear to be the case with *us*, is more than those who are acquainted with the state of things in this respect will vouch for.

When I was myself in France in 1774, I saw sufficient reason to believe, that hardly any person of eminence, in church or state, and especially in the least degree eminent in philosophy, or literature,  
(whose

(whose opinions in all countries are, sooner or later, adopted by others) were believers in Christianity; and no person will suppose that there has been any change in favour of Christianity in the last twenty years. A person, I believe now living, and one of the best informed men in the country, assured me very gravely, that (paying me a compliment) I was the first person he had ever met with, of whose understanding he had any opinion, who pretended to believe Christianity. To this all the company assented. And not only were the philosophers, and other leading men in France, at that time unbelievers in Christianity, or deists, but *atheists*, denying the being of a God. Nay Voltaire himself, who was then living, was considered by them as a weak-minded man, because, though an unbeliever in revelation, he believed in a God.

When I asked these gentlemen what it was that appeared to them so incredible in Christianity, that they rejected it without farther examination (for they did not pretend to have employed much time on the subject) they mentioned the doctrines of transubstantiation, and the trinity, as things too palpably absurd to require any discussion. It is, without doubt, the civil establishment of such Christianity as this, at which the common sense of mankind will ever revolt, that makes so many unbelievers of persons who will not take the trouble to read the scriptures for themselves, or who have not sagacity or patience to see through the false glosses that have been so long put

upon them. These systems, and the blindness and obstinacy in the governing powers, in rejecting every proposal of reforming the most palpable abuses, and the most manifest oppressions, make unbelievers much faster than all rational Christians can unmake them.

Nothing, however, can ever counteract the fatal influence of such corrupt Christianity, as is supported by these hierarchies, which are also intolerably expensive and oppressive, but the exhibition of rational Christianity, with its proper evidence, by unitarian Christians. But these are yet so few, compared with the bulk of Christians, who are trinitarians, that superficial observers, as unbelievers in general are, who judge by the great mass, pay but little regard to their representations.

Happily, this infidelity is, in its turn, destroying those antichristian establishments which gave birth to it; and when this great revolution shall be accomplished, genuine unadulterated Christianity, meeting with less obstruction, will not fail to recommend and establish itself by its own evidence, and become the religion of the whole world. True Christianity stands in no need of the aid of civil power.

This was the idea of the great Sir Isaac Newton, as appears from the evidence of the excellent Mr. Whiston, in the following passage of his *Essay on the Revelation*, 2d edition, p. 321. "Sir Isaac Newton had a very sagacious conjecture, which he told

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“ Dr. Clarke, from whom I received it, that the  
“ overbearing tyranny and persecuting power of the  
“ antichristian party, which hath so long corrupted  
“ Christianity, and enslaved the Christian world,  
“ must be put a stop to, and broken to pieces by the  
“ prevalence of infidelity, for some time, before pri-  
“ mitive Christianity could be restored; which seems  
“ to be the very means that is now working in Eu-  
“ rope, for the same good and great end of Pro-  
“ vidence. Possibly he might think that our Sa-  
“ viour’s own words implied it: When the Son of  
“ Man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?  
“ Luke xviii. 8. See Constitut. Apost. vi. 18;  
“ vii. 32; or possibly he might think no other way  
“ so likely to do it in human affairs; it being, I  
“ acknowledge, too sadly evident, that there is not  
“ at present religion enough in Christendom, to put  
“ a stop to such antichristian tyranny and persecution,  
“ upon any genuine principles of Christianity.”

The concluding observation of Mr. Whiston ap-  
pears to me to be very just. It seems probable that  
no Christians, not even the freest, and boldest, would  
ever have done what was necessary to be done, to  
the overturning of these corrupt establishments of  
Christianity, that unbelievers have lately done in  
France.

This great event of the late revolution in France  
appears to me, and many others, to be not improba-  
bly the accomplishment of the following part of the  
Revelation,

Revelation, chap. xi. 3. ‘ And the same hour there  
 ‘ was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the  
 ‘ city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men  
 ‘ (or literally, *names of men*) seven thousand, and the  
 ‘ remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to God.’

An earthquake, as I have observed, may signify a great convulsion, and revolution, in states ; and as the Papal dominions were divided into ten parts, one of which, and one of the principal of them, was France, it is properly called *a tenth part of the city*, or of the mystical *Babylon*. And if by *names of men*, we understand their *titles*, such as those of the nobility, and other hereditary distinctions, all of which are now abolished, the accomplishment of the prediction will appear to be wonderfully exact. It is farther remarkable, that this passage immediately precedes what I have quoted before concerning the *nations being angry*, and the wrath of God being come, for the *destruction of those who have destroyed the earth*.

It is farther remarkable, that the kings of France were those who gave the Popes their temporalities, and the rank they now hold among the princes of the world. And it is foretold, Rev. xvii. 16, that ‘ those  
 ‘ kings who gave their power and strength unto the  
 ‘ beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make  
 ‘ her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and  
 ‘ burn her with fire. For God has put it in their  
 ‘ hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree to give their  
 ‘ kingdoms unto the beast, until the words of God  
 ‘ shall be fulfilled.’

May

May we not hence conclude it to be highly probable, that what has taken place in France will be done in other countries? But the total destruction of this great antichristian power seems to be reserved for the second coming of Christ in person, by the *brightness of whose appearance*, and not before, he is, according to the apostle Paul, to be completely *destroyed*. And with this view, as well as others, every Protestant Christian should say, ‘Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.’ In the mean time, let us attend to the solemn admonition in the Revelation xviii. 4. ‘I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities \*.’

\* That the opinion here advanced, concerning the danger of the civil powers of Europe, in consequence of their connexion with antichristian ecclesiastical systems, has been long entertained by me, may appear from the following extract from my *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 484. “It is nothing but the alliance of the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of this world (an alliance which our Lord himself expressly disclaimed) that supports the gospel corruptions of Christianity; and perhaps we must wait for the fall of the civil powers before this most unnatural alliance be broken. Calamitous, no doubt, will that time be. But what convulsion in the political world ought to be a subject of lamentation, if it be attended with so desirable an event? May the kingdom of God, and of Christ, (that which I conceive to be intended in the Lord’s Prayer) truly and fully come, though all the kingdoms of the world be removed in order to make way for it.”

As



As the second coming of Christ will be during the general prevalence of infidelity, so it will be sudden, and most unexpected. This is the language of our Saviour himself, Mat. xxiv. 37. ‘As the days of Noah were, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating, and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, unto the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came, and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.’ Luke xvii. 28. ‘Likewise, also as it was in the days of Lot. They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, he rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be when the Son of Man is revealed.’ The apostle Paul also says, 1 Thes. v. 2. ‘Yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.’

But sudden and unexpected as the coming of Christ will be, it will be most conspicuous. Speaking of his return, he says, Mat. xxiv. 26. ‘If they shall say unto you, Behold he’ (i. e. the Messiah) ‘is in the desert, go not forth. Behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west,

' west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man  
 ' be.' As the ascent of Jesus was conspicuous, and  
 probably leisurely, so will be his descent. While  
 the disciples were viewing him as he ascended, we  
 read, Acts i. 10, ' two men stood by them in white  
 ' apparel, who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why  
 ' stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus,  
 ' who is taken from you into heaven, shall so come  
 ' in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.'  
 Here is no figurative language, no ambiguous ex-  
 pression. Neither is there in what the apostle says  
 concerning the resurrection of the virtuous dead,  
 which will take place at the coming of Christ,  
 which, in the Revelation is called *the first resurrec-*  
*tion*, 1 Thes. iv. 14. ' If we believe that Jesus died,  
 ' and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Je-  
 ' sus shall God bring with him. For this we say  
 ' unto you, by the word of the Lord, that we who  
 ' are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord,  
 ' shall have no advantage over those who are asleep.  
 ' For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven,  
 ' with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and  
 ' with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ  
 ' shall rise first. Then we who are alive, and re-  
 ' main, shall be caught up together with them in the  
 ' clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall  
 ' we ever be with the Lord.' Again he says, 1 Cor.  
 xv. 51. ' We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be  
 ' changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,  
 ' at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and  
 ' the

‘the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall  
‘be changed.’

The certainty of this great catastrophe should be a sufficient motive with all Christians, who, as such, entertain no doubt with respect to the fact, to keep it constantly in view, and to regulate their whole conduct with a view to it. But if we apprehend it to be in a stricter sense of the word really *near*, which, from the present aspect of things, I own I am inclined to think may be the case, our attention is drawn to it in a most forcible manner. Did we really expect to see this great event, viz. the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, we should hardly think or speak of any thing else; and the present commotions in the political world, extraordinary as they certainly are, would appear as nothing in comparison with it. What would otherwise be *great*, would, with respect to this, seem exceedingly *little*, and insignificant.

What then, my brethren, is the practical inference that we should draw from finding, or even suspecting, ourselves to be in this situation, the kingdom of heaven being at hand, but to repent, and by a change of heart and of life to be prepared for it; that  
‘when our Lord shall return, and take an account  
‘of his servants, we may be found of him without  
‘spot and blameless, and not be ashamed before him  
‘at his coming?’ ‘Seeing,’ as the apostle Peter says,  
‘we look for these things, what manner of persons  
‘ought we to be, in all holy conversation and god-  
‘liness.’

February 28, 1794.

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The aspect of things, it cannot be denied, is, in the highest degree, alarming, making life, and every thing in it, peculiarly uncertain. What could have been more unexpected than the events of any one of the last four years, at the beginning of it? What a total revolution in the ideas, and conduct of a whole nation! What a total subversion of principles, what reverses of fortune, and what a waste of life! In how bloody and eventful a war are we engaged, how inconsiderable in its beginning, how rapid and wide in its progress, and how dark with respect to its termination! At first it resembled Elijah's cloud, appearing no bigger than a *man's hand*; but now it covers, and darkens, the whole European hemisphere!

Now, whatever we may think, as politicians (and with us every man will have his own opinion, on a subject so interesting to us all) I would, in this place, admonish you not to overlook the hand of God in the great scene that is now opening upon us. Nothing can ever come to pass without his appointment, or permission; and then, whatever be the views of men, we cannot doubt, but that his are always wise, righteous, and good. Let us, therefore, exercise faith in him, believing that though 'clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are for ever the habitation of his throne.' All those who appear on the theatre of public affairs, in the field, or the cabinet, both those whom we praise, and those whom we blame, are equally instruments in his hands, and execute all his pleasure. Let this reflection,

tion, then, in our cooler moments, (and I hope we shall endeavour, in all the tumult of affairs, to make these as many as possible) lead us to look more to God, and less to man; and consequently, in all the troubles in which we may be involved, repose the most unshaken confidence in him, and thence ‘in  
 ‘patience possess our own souls,’ especially when it is evident that it is wholly out of our power to alter the course of events. If we be careful so to live as to be at all times prepared to die, what have we to fear, even though, as the Psalmist says, the ‘earth be  
 ‘removed, and the mountains be carried into the  
 ‘midst of the sea?’ Whatever turn the course of things may take, it cannot then be to our disadvantage. What, then, should hinder our contemplating the great scene, that seems now to be opening upon us, awful as it is, with tranquillity, and even with satisfaction, from our firm persuasion, that its termination will be glorious and happy?

Lastly, the more there are who indulge these enlarged and just views, who cultivate a sense of piety to God (which will always lead us to suppress resentment, and to promote goodwill towards men) the more favour, in the righteous administration of Providence, will be shewn to the country in which they shall be found. God, we know, would have spared even Sodom, if so many as ten righteous men had been found in it; and our Saviour, alluding, as I am inclined to think, to these very times, which seem to be approaching, says, that ‘for the elect’s sake they  
 ‘will

*February 28, 1794.*

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‘ will be shortened.’ For our own sakes, therefore, for the sake of our friends, of our country, and of every thing that is dear to us in it, let us attend to the admonition of my text, ‘ to repent, for the ‘ kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ It is ‘ righteous-  
‘ nefs that exalteth a nation’, and ‘ sin’ only is the  
‘ reproach,’ and will be the ruin, ‘ of any people.’

**D**

**APPENDIX.**



## APPENDIX.

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HAVING originally got the leading ideas that are enlarged upon in the preceding discourse from *Dr. Hartley's Observations on Man*, a work published in 1749, I think it may not be amiss to subjoin to it some extracts from that work, as, from his authority, the serious apprehensions, with which I have, ever since I read it, been impressed, will receive more weight, than they could acquire from any person, who, writing in these times, might be supposed to be particularly influenced by the aspect of them, and by his own situation with respect to them. I wish likewise by this, as well as every other means, to direct the attention of my readers to that most excellent work, to which I am indebted, if I may so say, for the whole moral conformation of my mind.

“How near the dissolution of the present governments, generally or particularly, may be, would be great rashness to affirm. Christ will come in this sense also ‘as a thief in the night.’ Our duty is therefore to watch and to pray; to be faithful stewards; to give meat, and all other requisites, in due season, to those under our care; and to endeavour by these, and all other lawful means, to preserve the government, under whose protection we live, from dissolution.”



solution, seeking the peace of it, and submitting to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. No prayers, no endeavours of this kind can fail of having some good effect, public or private, for the preservation of ourselves and others. The great dispensations of Providence are conducted by means that are either secret, or, if they appear, that are judged feeble and inefficacious.—No man can tell, however private his station may be, but his fervent prayer may avail to the salvation of much people. But it is more peculiarly the duty of magistrates thus to watch over their subjects, to pray for them, and to set about the reformation of all matters civil and ecclesiastical, to the utmost of their power. Good governors may promote the welfare and continuance of a state, and wicked ones must accelerate its ruin."

"The sacred history affords us instances of both kinds, and they are recorded there for the admonition of kings and princes in all future times." V. ii. p. 368.

"There are many prophecies which declare the fall of the ecclesiastical powers of the Christian world. And though each church seems to flatter itself with the hopes of being exempted; yet it is very plain that the prophetic characters belong to all. They have all left the true, pure, simple religion, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. They are all merchants of the earth, and have set up a kingdom of this world, abounding in riches, temporal power, and external pomp. They have all a dogmatizing spirit, and persecute such as do not receive

receive their own mark, and worship the image which they have set up. They all neglect Christ's command of preaching the gospel to all nations, and even that of going to 'the lost sheep of the house of 'Israel;' there being innumerable multitudes in all Christian countries who have never been taught to read, and who are in other respects also destitute of the means of saving knowledge. 'Tis very true that the church of Rome is 'Babylon the great and the 'mother of harlots,' and of the 'abominations of the 'earth.' But all the rest have copied her example more or less. They have all received money like *Gebazi*; and therefore the leprosy of *Naaman* will cleave to them, and to their seed for ever. And this impurity may be considered, not only as justifying the application of the prophecies to all the Christian churches, but as a natural cause for their downfall. The corrupt governors of the several churches will ever oppose the true gospel, and in so doing will bring ruin upon themselves." P. 371.

"As the downfall of the Jewish state under Titus was the occasion of the publication of the gospel to us Gentiles, so our downfall may contribute to the restoration of the Jews, and both together bring on the final publication and prevalence of the true religion. Thus the type and the thing typified will coincide. The first fruits and the lump are made holy together." P. 375.

"The downfall of the civil and ecclesiastical powers must both be attended with such public calamities, as will make men serious, and also

drive them from the countries of *Christianity* into the remote parts of the world, particularly into the East and West-Indies; whither, consequently, they will carry their religion, now purified from errors and superstitions." P. 377.

"That worldly-mindedness, and neglect of duty in the clergy, must hasten our ruin, cannot be doubted. These are 'the salt of the earth,' and the 'light of the world.' If they lose their savour, the whole nation, where this happens, will be converted into one putrid mass. If their light become darkness, the whole body politic must be dark also. The degeneracy of the court of *Rome*, and secular bishops abroad, are too notorious to be mentioned. They almost cease to give offence, as they scarce pretend to any function or authority besides what is temporal. Yet still there is great mockery of God in their external pomp, and profanation of sacred titles; which, sooner or later, will bring down vengeance upon them. And as the court of Rome has been at the head of the great apostasy, and corruption of the Christian church; and seems evidently marked out in various places of the scriptures, the severest judgments are probably reserved for her. But I rather choose to speak to what falls under the observation of all serious, attentive persons in this kingdom. The superior clergy are in general, ambitious, and eager in the pursuit of riches; flatterers of the great, and subservient to party interest; negligent of their own immediate charges, and also of the inferior clergy,

and

and their immediate charges. The inferior clergy imitate their superiors, and in general take little more care of their parishes than barely what is necessary to avoid the censure of the law. And the clergy of all ranks are, in general, either ignorant, or if they do apply, it is rather to profane learning, to philosophical or political matters, than to the study of the scriptures, of the Oriental languages, of the fathers, and ecclesiastical authors, and of the writings of devout men in different ages of the church. I say this is in general the case; i. e. far the greater part of the clergy of all ranks in this kingdom are of this kind. But there are some of a quite different character; men eminent for piety, sacred learning, and the faithful discharge of their duty, and who, it is not to be doubted, mourn in secret for the crying sins of this and other nations. The clergy, in general, are also far more free from open and gross vices, than any other denomination of men amongst us, physicians, lawyers, merchants, soldiers, &c. However, this may be otherwise hereafter. For it is said that in some foreign countries the superior clergy, in others the inferior, are as corrupt and abandoned, or more so, than any other order of men. The clergy in this kingdom seem to be what one might expect from the mixture of good and bad influences that affect them. But then, if we make this candid allowance for *them*, we must also make it for persons in the high ranks of life; for their infidelity, lewdness, and sordid self-interest.

And

And though it becomes an humble, charitable and impartial man, to make all these allowances, yet he cannot but see, that the judgments of God are ready to fall upon us all for these things; and that they may fall first, and with the greatest weight, upon those, who, having the highest office committed to them in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, neglect it, and are become mere 'merchants of the earth,' and 'shepherds that feed themselves, and not their flocks.' P. 450.

"These are my real and earnest sentiments upon these points. It would be great rashness to fix a time for the breaking of the storm that hangs over our heads, as it is blindness and infatuation not to see it; nor to be aware, that it may break. And yet this infatuation has always attended all falling states. The kingdoms of Judah and Israel, which are the types of all the rest, were thus infatuated. It may be, that the prophecies concerning Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Egypt, &c. will become applicable to particular kingdoms before their fall, and warn the good to flee out of them. And Christendom in general seems ready to assume to itself the place and lot of the Jews, after they had rejected their Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Let no one deceive himself, or others. The present circumstances of the world are extraordinary and critical, beyond what has ever yet happened. If we refuse to let Christ reign over us, as our Redeemer and Saviour, we must be slain before his face, as enemies, at his second coming." 455.

To

To these passages from Dr. Hartley, I shall add another from an excellent *Sermon preached in the chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, December 13, 1793, the day appointed for the commemoration of the Benefactors to that Society.* p. 13, &c.

“Nature recoils with horror at the spectacle now presented by their unfortunate country [France]. Under the guidance, however, of divine revelation, the contemplative mind may discern the signs of these times, and the hand of Providence directing the madness of the people. The oracles of truth, when foretelling the persecutions to be endured by Christians, assure us, ‘He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword.’ *They have shed (saith the angel) the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.* Destruction awaits the persecutor. And it must excite our astonishment to see vestiges of this righteous dispensation in what is passing before us. Lyons is recorded in early history, as the spot where a company of Martyrs glorified God. Lyons is now devoted, and its name erased from the memory of man. Paris once streamed with the blood of the Hugonots: Paris hath since been dyed with the slaughter of that court and clergy, which instigated the unutterable deed.”

“Let us, too, be honest in declaring, whether if the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, the revocation of the edict of Nantz, or a Spanish act of faith, were dictated by the spirit of Antichrist; the deprivation

of

of the TWO THOUSAND ejected Ministers; the Terrors which forced our countrymen to take refuge in the wilds of America, and the two religious conflagrations which have disgraced our own days, demonstrated the presiding influence of a mind like that which was in Jesus."

"One particular in which the prophecy appears to enlighten us, is the fate of the Gallican church. The revolted city of the apocalypse is supposed to represent the Antichristian community established in the European territory of the western Roman empire, still subsisting in its pollarchical and dismembered state. Of this city it is written, that the fall of a tenth part would a short time precede that of the rest; and that its overthrow would be accompanied by an earthquake, and the destruction of *seven chiliads of the names of men*. As France was one of the ten kingdoms founded on the ruins of the western empire; as violent commotions are now agitating the political world, from the Borysthènes to the Atlantic; as seven classes have lately been deprived of their privileges and titles; the curiosity of the Christian scholar is beyond measure excited; and will be gratified with the discovery of various circumstances which will confirm his faith; but which a desire of brevity obliges me to refer to his private consideration. One question, however, I cannot help proposing; that if we be of that chosen people who have in truth come out of Babylon, who partake not of her sins, and merit not her plagues, why should we  
appear

appear unprepared, or disinclined, to comply with the angelic mandate, and begin, at least, some prelude to that song of triumph, 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles, and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.'

"The legislators of France are Deists! While they expatiated freely in every region of useful science, they were enjoined to *"take for granted"* those controversial matters of religion, their forefathers had some good reason for adhering to \*." — "They were not permitted to distinguish the doctrines of our Lord from those of their church: Their mind arrived at maturity in some points, disdained the puerilities on which they dared not speculate; and rejected the gospel, on account of the meretricious dress in which it was introduced to them."

"The legislators of France are deists! Much as we may lament their infidelity in their private capacity, we rejoice that, as lawgivers, they are unbelievers. Indifferent alike to all professions, and all sects, they will not form an unnatural alliance with one, nor proscribe all others with civil incapacities, imprisonment, and death. Every persuasion will enjoy their equal and wise protection; and genuine Christianity, undisguised with absurd confessions, and not made contemptible by ridiculous ceremonies, will exert her

\* This is quoted from a speech of Dr. Milner, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, on the trial of Mr. Frend.



proper energies ; will present to the understanding of the individual her miraculous credentials of prophecies completed in our time ; and gain her establishment, not in word, but in deed ; not in the civil code, but in the heart ; not as a necessary engine of the state, but as the truth, and the way to eternal life. Superstition will no longer “rear her mitred front in “their courts and parliaments \* ;” but the dominion of Christ, triumphant in that country, will be an earnest of his obtaining the ‘heathen for his inheritance, ‘and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.’

\* Alluding to Mr. Burke’s encomium on the Church of England.

THE END.

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7

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MARCH 30, 1794.

*By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.*

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The Author's Farewell Discourse

TO HIS CONGREGATION.

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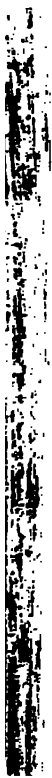
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1794.



## P R E F A C E.

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HAVING been requested to publish this sermon, I have annexed to it my letter of resignation, for the sake of introducing the answer of the congregation, and the addresses that have been sent to me, on occasion of my leaving this country, from the two united congregations at Birmingham, from the Unitarian Society, and from the young men and women who have attended my private lectures on the subject of natural and revealed religion. I wish to express my gratitude for the affection that has been shewn me, by perpetuating, as far as I can, the marks that I have received of it. These addresses will also serve to shew that, though calumniated, and execrated, by many, this has been more than compensated  
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by the warm attachment of others; which may encourage persons in similar situations to persevere in what appears to them to be right, fearless of any consequences that may result from it. These addresses contain some expressions that are too highly complimentary. But, as Dr. Franklin used to say, “undue praise may serve to balance “undue censure.”

It is painful, no doubt, to take leave, as I do in this discourse, of such a congregation as that with which I have been so happily connected, and which promised increasing satisfaction. But such genuine marks of esteem and affection, as I have received from the members of it, cannot be unattended with pleasure. No joy, or sorrow, in this life, can be expected to be wholly unmixed. This is a world of trial and discipline; and we should be willing to take

the painful, as well as the pleasurable ingredients in it. It will be happy if we be improved by them, and be thereby prepared for a state, in which this kind of discipline will not be necessary; where there will be ‘no more pain,’ and where ‘all tears will be wiped from our eyes.’

I also take this opportunity of expressing my satisfaction in the candid attention with which I have of late been heard by unusually crowded audiences, consisting chiefly of strangers; thinking it to be a symptom of abating prejudice, and of the prevalence of better information than has hitherto obtained. The time, I hope, is approaching, when all delusion will vanish; when men and things will be seen in their true light; and the prevalence of truth will, no doubt, be attended with an increase of general happiness.

FAREWELL





## FAREWELL DISCOURSE.

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*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.*

Acts xx. 32.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

BEING now to resign my pastoral charge among you, my thoughts are naturally turned to the sentiments expressed by the apostle Paul, when he was in a similar situation with respect to the church of Ephesus. I do not pretend to his zeal or activity; but my wishes for your best interests are sincere and ardent, and I cannot shew it better than by directing your attention to sentiments most interesting to us all as Christians, and most conducive to our common edification.

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With Paul I commend you to the good providence of God ; praying that he would direct you in all your ways, and especially that you may be led to a right knowledge of the gospel, that you may imbibe the genuine spirit, and practise the duties of it, as the only way to ensure your present and future happiness. In his own emphatical language, in my text, ‘ I commend you ‘ to God, and the word of his grace, which ‘ is able to build you up, and to give you an ‘ inheritance among them that are sanctified.’ By securing the latter, you cannot entertain a doubt of your title to the former. For, as the same apostle observes, ‘ All things work together for good to them ‘ that love God ;’ the great object of the dispensation of the gospel being ‘ to purify ‘ to himself a peculiar people, zealous of ‘ good works.’

This is also the great object of all Christian churches. They consist of persons who form themselves into societies for the purpose of promoting their mutual edification, and with this view they provide themselves with such *ministers*, or assistants (for  
such

such is the real meaning and nature of our office) as they deem best calculated to promote that end; giving them proper leisure for the study of the scriptures, for storing their minds with such knowledge as will best qualify them to instruct others, and for the acquirement of every other accomplishment that can enable them to do it to the most advantage. An office and employment the most truly useful, and therefore honourable.

The great importance of this object of Christian societies is strongly expressed by the apostle in my text. It is nothing less than to *build up* the members of them, that is, in faith and holiness, to raise and improve their characters, in order ‘to give them an inheritance among them that are sanctified;’ *i. e.* to prepare them for future happiness. It is, as it were, to take men out of the world, to wean them from the low pursuits and gratifications of it, and to make them *citizens of heaven*; to raise the sons of men to the high character, and honour, of the *sons of God*, and make them heirs of a happy immortality. And is not every other

object low and mean compared with this ? Give it, then, that place in your regards to which it is entitled, and, amidst all the necessary cares of this life, never lose sight of your great destination for another. Suffer not your minds to be fascinated by any thing that this world can present to you ; but, as the apostle exhorts, holding all other things in deservedly low estimation, ‘ walk worthy of God, and be fruitful in every good word and work to do his will.’ ‘ Seeing,’ as another apostle observes, ‘ that all these things must be dissolved,’ since all our connexions here must soon be broken, at least by death, and an infinitely more important state awaits us beyond the grave, ‘ what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness ?’

All the connexions we form here, the most endearing and important ones, are slight and transient. We may flatter ourselves that we are planning our destination for a long time to come, and make our arrangements accordingly, as I did when I was settled at Birmingham, and again with you ; but unforeseen circumstances occur, and all our plans

plans are deranged, new ones must be formed, and a great portion of life is often employed, and in a manner wasted, in making new arrangements, which may prove to be as temporary, and to as little purpose.

But, my brethren, the gospel, the study and practice of which it has been my business to recommend to you, holds out to us an object as much more fixed and stable, as it is in itself of more value. Our habitations here are perishable, liable to be destroyed by lawless violence ; but there are ‘ houses ‘ not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’ Here we have *no continuing city*, no place of absolute security, where we can depend upon not being disturbed. But in heaven is ‘ a rest for the people of God,’ a place where ‘ the wicked cease from troubling,’ and where those who are weary with their unceasing persecution may depend upon being unmolested. Let us, then, when we are harassed and disturbed here, and especially when we are exposed to disturbance because we ourselves are disposed to be quiet, wishing to live at peace ourselves, and desirous of promoting a disposition to peace in others,

6      *The Use of Christianity,*

look forwards to that peaceful and happy state, and cultivate a temper of mind most suited to it.

Permit me to add, that I flatter myself our approaching separation may furnish an additional motive for doing every thing in our power to secure a happy meeting, and a more permanent connexion, in a world of greater stability than this. On my part, I have thought the connexion a happy one, and was far from having any wish ever to change it on this side the grave; and such, I would hope, has been your disposition with respect to me. - And what is it that makes heaven itself most desirable, but the society of such friends as we wish to live with here? This world, in its present state, would be sufficiently paradisiacal for men, if they were what they ought to be, and what they are capable of being; if they were as improved in all respects as we have reason to think they hereafter will be. If, then, our present separation be painful, let us be looking, and preparing, for a state in which no event so mutually disagreeable will occur.

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*especially in difficult Times.*

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Our present situation, and that of the Dissenters in general, calls in a particular manner for the exercise of Christian principles. The cause of the Dissenters may now be said to be, what Christianity itself originally was, and long continued to be, viz. 'a sect every where spoken against.' We are exposed to insult and outrage, though not to open and avowed persecution, on this account. But this situation, though not to be desired by us, is most favourable to the cultivation of that temper of mind which is most eminently Christian, to the virtues of patience, fortitude, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and heavenli-mindedness; virtues of the most exalted kind, contributing most to the dignity of human nature, but for which there is comparatively but little call, or occasion, in a season of prosperity.

'Woe unto you,' says our Saviour, 'when all men speak well of you.' But, 'blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake.' Let us, in the first place, then, shew that

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the evil that is spoken of us is *falsely* spoken, that is, give reasonable evidence of it ; for to satisfy the violently prejudiced is impossible, and not to be expected of any man. It is what our Saviour himself and the apostles were unequal to. But this being done, with respect to those who are at all candid, and who will hear reason, conscious integrity is abundantly sufficient to support a man under any calumny.

Moreover, conscious of our own integrity, we can look down upon our enemies, not with hatred or ill will, but with compassion, as beings in a depraved and imperfect state, neither qualified to be happy themselves, nor to communicate happiness to others.

All persons under the influence of malignant passions are necessarily, and by the inviolable law of our natures, in an uneasy state. Their habitual feelings, even when gratified, are unpleasant. But the feelings of those who are merely exposed to the malignity of others, without feeling any thing of the kind themselves, are serene, and highly pleasurable ; besides being attended  
with

with a consciousness of superiority of character, and of greater advances in intellectual improvement.

The man who obeys the first impulse of natural appetite, corporeal or mental, gives no proof of his being a rational agent ; for brutes are governed by appetite. But the man who refrains from gratifying his appetite, and natural desire, whether that of revenging himself upon his enemy, or any other, must do it by the help of *reason*. He must have some degree of comprehension of mind, which takes in distant objects ; and this is the thing that manifests a superiority of character.

The man who can even defer his revenge, and merely restrain his passion, is superior to him who gives way to the first impulse of it. But he who can so far make allowance for the hatred of his enemies, as to feel compassion and good will towards them while he knows the ill will they bear him, is infinitely superior. We are not moved to anger by the anger of a child. Neither, then, should we be by the anger and malignity of those grown persons, whom,

whom, with respect to intellectual and moral improvement, we regard in no higher a light.

On account of the low rank of every sentiment bordering on anger and resentment (requiring only particular impressions to excite them, and much reflection to suppress them) such as zeal for any particular cause, even that of religion, it is easy to excite it, and lead men to act upon it with the greatest violence, so as to hate and persecute others who differ from them. Men who have no real religion at all can do this, as is evident in all persecutions, in the history of the crusades, when hundreds of thousands, moved, as they imagined with holy zeal, went to drive the infidels from the Holy Land, and also in the riots in Birmingham. Also to suffer in any cause with the spirit with which men die in battle, that is, with obstinacy and hatred, is not very difficult. Mahometans fight for their religion, and the North American Indians die with the greatest heroism in this respect. But to suffer and die with meekness, with resignation to God, and  
good

good will to men, not excepting our persecutors; to die praying with our Saviour, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' is a far more difficult attainment, but by no means uncommon among Christians.

Still less shall we be disturbed at the malignity of others, when we consider that our enemies, as well as our friends, are acting the part assigned them by the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, that they are in their proper place as well as we in ours (though, being instigated by their own bad dispositions, this is no apology for their conduct) and that the plan of the great drama, in which we are all actors, is so arranged, that good will finally result from the evil that we experience ourselves, or see in others. 'The wrath of man,' says the Psalmist, 'shall praise God.'

All the opposition we meet with makes part of the useful and necessary discipline of life, and no great character could be formed, or any great good be done, without it. Our Saviour, the apostles, the reformers from Popery, and the Puritans and Nonconformists,

ists, were equally exposed to it. And shall we complain? We ought rather to think ourselves honoured by it, and, with the apostles, 'rejoice that we are counted 'worthy to suffer for the name of the Lord 'Jesus;' reflecting, that 'if we suffer with 'him, we shall also reign with him, and be 'glorified together.' Of our Lord himself it is said, that 'for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising 'the shame.' Ought we not, then, I will not say be displeased, and complain, but ought we not to rejoice, and be thankful, for every part of that dispensation of Providence, which we cannot doubt is calculated, and intended, to be so highly beneficial to us?

If we take a calm retrospect of our own past experience, we shall all of us, I am persuaded, be satisfied, that many events, seemingly the most disastrous, were, in fact, the most beneficial to us; that they were really mercies, though in the disguise of judgments. And shall we not then conclude, that every other evil, coming from the same hand, equally leads to good, though

though we may not for the present see it to be so. When Jacob lost his beloved son Joseph, he said, ‘All these things are ‘against me;’ though it appeared afterwards to be eminently *for* him. As the psalmist says with respect to God, ‘Clouds ‘and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation ‘of his throne.’

Thus instructed by the unerring word of God, and our own experience, as far as it goes, concurring with it, we may be prepared to adopt the noble language of the prophet Habakkuk; who, after enumerating the loss of every thing valuable to man, and that not only tended to his comfort, but was seemingly necessary to his existence in this life, could say, ‘Yet will I rejoice in ‘the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.’ With respect to the society of friends, and every thing else that is most dear to us (and many of these I shall be deprived of in leaving this connexion) we must say with Job, ‘The Lord gave, and ‘the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the ‘name of the Lord.’ Something may arise  
out

out of our afflictions, or even accompany them, that shall be an abundant compensation for them. And if they only teach us patience, fortitude, and trust in God, it is alone an abundant compensation, though they should bring nothing else along with them.

While we are sensible that we live under the government of a good Being, we cannot doubt, but that every thing that befalls us is intended for our good. We must not forget, that it is only by discipline, and often very severe discipline too, that great and excellent characters are ever formed; and no man can tell how much, or how severe discipline may be necessary for himself. David could say, that ‘before he was afflicted he went astray.’ And there is a source of satisfaction even in adversity, or nearly connected with it, that persons in prosperity and affluence have no idea of.

Of this I am myself not without some experience. My violent expulsion from a favourite situation at Birmingham was, to appearance, sufficiently disastrous, and I was not without feeling it to be so. Yet I have had more than a recompense, internal  
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*especially in difficult Times.* 15

and external; so as to make me consider it even now as no evil upon the whole; and I am far from wishing, if it were possible, that it might not have happened.

Among other resources afforded me by a kind Providence, was the seasonable and generous reception I met with among you; an event which I hope you are convinced I have endeavoured to improve.

Having, without any previous expectation, found a sphere of usefulness, and a source of happiness, here, I shall not despair of finding a similar situation in America. But there is no situation in the world, in which they who are disposed to exert themselves in the service of mankind (which is the most proper service of God, our common creator and parent) may not find an opportunity of doing it, to more or less advantage; and no man is answerable for more than it is in his power to do.

But a state of suffering is a state of usefulness, no less than one of the most active exertion; and very frequently it operates in the most effectual and distinguished manner. Did not our Saviour effect more by his



death, the apostles by their sufferings, and the Protestant martyrs by their various persecutions, than by their preaching? It is commonly, and justly observed, that “example is before precept.” And what is it that demonstrates the real force of religious principles so much as patient suffering for them? It is a clear proof of the value that the sufferer sets upon them, and such as is more likely to impress others than any argument. And the experience of ages confirms the observation, so as to have given rise to the proverb, that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

Was the persecution of the early Christians, of the Protestants in France, in the Low Countries, or in England, of any disservice to their cause? Did the persecution of the Puritans by queen Elizabeth, and the Stuarts, diminish their numbers, or their zeal? It increased both, as appeared at the time of the civil wars. What do we learn on this subject from the different treatment that Dissenters have met with in late times? They have constantly melted away in the sunshine of prosperity, and  
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have become numerous and zealous in adversity. It is even probable that their numbers were diminished one third, if not one half, and the rest were growing very lukewarm, in the reigns of George I. and II. princes who were friendly to them; but of late their numbers, and their zeal, are greatly increased.

Shall we hesitate, then, to suffer in the cause of important truth, when we see it to be so greatly promoted by this means? If we have any value for our principles, we shall rejoice in the opportunities that are afforded us of serving the cause of truth in seasons of persecution (occurring in the course of divine Providence, and not sought by ourselves, for that would be ostentation and presumption) as the only way in which many persons have it in their power to promote it, to any great purpose. For all can advance the cause by suffering, though but few have sufficient ability to argue for it. But doubly honoured is the man whom Providence enables, and disposes (for all is of God) to serve it in both these ways.

Besides, such a degree of persecution as  
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that to which we are exposed, will tend to purge our societies of lukewarm and unworthy members; of men who prefer the world, and the things of it, to the cause of truth, and a good conscience; and such are many of the richer sort among us, and in all societies; men who, by associating with other rich and worldly-minded men, and especially those who are within the influence of a court, and the honours and emoluments derived from it, catch too much of their spirit, become assimilated to their manners, and adopt their views. Let all such go to their proper place: we want them not. We want not even their wealth. True Christianity does not suppose, or require it. But in all cases of persecution, some of the most wealthy have proved the most zealous.

True Christians, devoid of superstition, will meet for public worship, and edify one another, even without the aid, or expence, of regular ministers. These are, no doubt, a convenience, but by no means necessary, even to the administration of the ordinances of baptism, or the Lord's supper. And, in  
situations

situations in which ministers cannot be had, Christian laymen will, I hope, have the good sense to do themselves every thing that has been usually done by their ministers. And at this time, there are helps abundantly sufficient for the purpose, even though Christian societies should be as destitute of talents, as of wealth.

This excellent lesson will be taught more effectually in a season of adversity, than of prosperity. And we ought to be thankful for every situation in which such valuable instruction is best inculcated. In the present and best ages of Christianity, not ‘many wise men after the flesh,’ and ‘not many mighty were chosen.’ And our Saviour even thanked his heavenly Father, that the gospel was “hidden from the wise and prudent;” not the truly wise, but from worldly wise men, those who have the world and the things of it for their chief object.

When riches and honours are the reward of Christianity, it will be thought by the world, that the profession of it is adopted for the sake of those riches and honours,

and no other reason of their conduct will be so much as looked for. But when a man's faith is attended with persecution, and abuse in every form, it will be evident that it has some other foundation, and such as will be thought worth inquiring into. And a dispassionate inquiry is all that truth, and Christianity, if it be founded on truth, requires. The same is the case with respect to any particular mode or form of Christianity. It disclaims all connexion with civil power, and worldly emolument.

It may justly be our pride, that, as Unitarians, our religion has been so far from being befriended, that it has, in all ages, and in all nations, been frowned upon by the civil magistrate; and yet in these seemingly unfavourable circumstances, it has constantly gained ground, and of late in a tenfold proportion to what it has ever done before, with thinking and serious men. Can there be a surer indication than this, that it will continue to gain ground, till it establish itself universally? But even then, it will, I trust, be as independent, as it is at present, of that civil *power* which is now hostile to  
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It. Hereafter, when time shall have abated the force of prejudice, it may be recorded to your honour, that you received not myself, as an individual, but an Unitarian, so obnoxious to popular odium as I have been, as well as to have had such a man as a Price (whose eulogium I need not make to you) for your minister.

Having shewn this Christian fortitude, and acted with so much true judgment, I hope you will continue to act the same part, unmoved by the censures of an unthinking world, and promoting the peace and welfare of your country, with being enemies to which we are most unjustly charged.

Should those calamitous times, the approach of which, led, as I conceived, by the light of scripture prophecy compared with the present aspect of things, I expressed my apprehensions of in my late *Fast Sermon*, really come, the Christian principles which I have, in this discourse, endeavoured to recommend to you, will be your best security; teaching you both how to *act*, and how to *suffer*, as circumstances may require. In

22. *The Use of Christianity,*

this case, though absent, I shall not exult in my safety from the storm, but sympathize with you, and almost wish to suffer along with you. For it is not any dread of this nature, but other circumstances, as you well know, that induce me to leave you.

In all events, our separation, and that from any of our friends, by death, or otherwise, is, in the eye of reason, of short continuance. For what are the remains of life which separate us from the dead, to any of us? It is, as the apostle says, but ‘as a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.’ And then, my Christian friends, you will rejoin your late most excellent pastor, Dr. Price, and all your deceased worthy pastors and friends, where you will not stand in need of our instructions, but derive knowledge from purer sources than ours, by nearer approaches to the great fountain of light.

There every cloud of error and prejudice, and especially those which lead us to mistake each other’s characters, and to think worse of one another than any of us, I hope, ought to do, will disappear. And the

happy consequence of this will be many persons embracing one another as brethren, who were here the most hostile to each other.

Then every truth will be seen, not only in its whole evidence, but in its proper importance. Bigotry, consequently, will be unknown, and no mistakes but those of the heart will be thought to be of any moment at all.

Could we imbibe those sentiments here below, we should make earth itself a perfect heaven; and our doing this as well as we are able, will be our best preparation for that blissful state. To have assisted any of you in this most important preparation, for what the apostle in my text calls 'the inheritance of the saints in light,' would be my greatest praise; as to meet you there would be my greatest joy.

As an evidence of your having imbibed the true spirit of Christianity yourselves, and of your being sensible of its importance, you will, each of you, exert yourselves in your several spheres, to extend the knowledge of it to others, and also endeavour



to infuse the same spirit into them. Do not imagine that this is the business of ministers only. *Clergy* and *laity*, in the sense in which the terms are now used, are unknown in the scriptures. All Christians are there distinguished by the phrase that is now rendered clergy. All Christians are there said to be ‘kings and priests unto God;’ and every man who can teach, should be a teacher; and without any ordination, besides the request of his fellow Christians, administer ever Christian ordinance.

But independently of this, which may be said to require some talents and ability, not possessed by all, there is a method in which all Christians, without exception, may be teachers of Christianity, and recommend it to others. It is by the open profession of it, and by a life and conversation conformable to it. This, though a silent, is, in many respects, the most effectual, method of preaching. ‘Let your light shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your father who is in heaven.’

But

But the mere open profession of Christianity by persons of respectable characters, that is, persons in general esteem for their good sense and good conduct, in an age like this, abounding with unbelievers, is of itself of great importance. Gladly would unbelievers have it to say that all men of sense are with them. On the contrary, I am confident that, whatever may be said with respect to good sense, or natural ability, which is often employed to the worst of purposes, men of real knowledge and reflection, as well as men of virtue and integrity, men who have given the most serious attention to the subject, and men of the most upright and unbiassed minds, without which natural ability will avail but little, are with us.

But to recommend Christianity to men of reason and reflection, it must be made to appear a rational thing. Men cannot embrace as sacred truth any thing at which their common sense revolts. Nor can that be considered as a truth of revealed religion, which is contrary to the most obvious and acknowledged truths of natural religion. And the greatest part of the unbelief of the  
present

present age, has evidently arisen from the gross abuses and corruptions of Christianity, especially such as are supported by the civil establishments of it. These it is the duty of every enlightened Christian, as he values his religion, and wishes to extend the knowledge of it, strenuously to oppose. And the present state of things calls for this in a peculiar manner.

Unbelievers must be shewn that their triumph over such Christianity as is supported by the state will avail them nothing. It is only their triumph over error and superstition, which are the bane of Christianity. What do they gain by exposing such doctrines as those of transubstantiation, and the trinity? These are not the doctrines of the scriptures, but the absurd devices of men; doctrines which, indeed, naturally arose in the state of things in which Christianity was embraced by heathens, previously tinged with their peculiar notions, but contrary to the plainest maxims and axioms of the scriptures.

The doctrine of the *unity of God*, is the one great object of the whole of the Jewish religion,

religion, and assumed as a fundamental principle in Christianity. The first of all the commandments is, ‘Thou shalt have no other gods beside me;’ and who was the speaker, but Jehovah, the great creator of heaven and earth, the same great Being who in the New Testament is stiled the ‘God and the father of our Lord Jesus Christ,’ and surely not Jesus Christ himself; because then there would be no such person as God the father at all; whereas the apostle says, ‘To us there is one God, even the Father; and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.’

Again, in all the civil establishments of Christianity, the character of the one God and father of all has been greatly debased by the idea of his arbitrarily selecting certain individuals of the human race, as the objects of his especial favour, while all the rest are left under an irreversible sentence of condemnation; and also by the idea of the inexorableness of his disposition, in not receiving penitent offenders, till satisfaction had been made to his justice by the death of Christ. Whereas his most solemn declarations

tions to Moses, and all the prophets, as a 'God merciful and gracious,' who 'for his name's sake,' and 'his mercy's sake' only, pardons offences, though ever so great; and all the discourses and parables of our Saviour, especially his most instructive parable of the prodigal son, exhibit him in a very different and much more amiable light, as requiring no atonement, or satisfaction, whatever besides the repentance, and return, of the worst of sinners.

If we have any real value for Christianity, we should exert ourselves to free it from these great incumbrances, which have already done it the greatest injury, and endangered its very existence. And if other well-meaning persons, from the fault of their education, and early impressions, exert themselves with great zeal in maintaining these spurious doctrines, we ought to shew no less zeal in favour of the great truths of which they are an infringement. If they imagine that they maintain the honour of Christ by asserting his divinity, are not we maintaining the honour of God, by refusing  
to

to allow any Being whatever to share with him in those honours, which he has declared that he will not give to another?

Let this, however, be done with all due allowance for the innocent prejudices of others; so as to think no worse of the moral characters of men, or their final state, on account of any mere difference of opinion. True piety and benevolence, or the love of God and of our neighbour, to produce which is the great object of all religion, are not confined to Unitarians; though, thinking more favourably of the character of the Supreme Being, and not thinking any man the object of his displeasure on account of his opinions, these great virtues, the foundation of all the rest, may be expected to find an easier entrance into our breasts, than into those of Calvinists and Trinitarians, who, thinking those who differ from them to be the objects of the divine abhorrence, may imagine that they cannot do wrong in entertaining the same sentiments concerning them; and this is the foundation of all persecution.

It is to the honour of this society, an honour

nour which I hope you will never lose, to be generally understood to hold the Christian faith in the purity that I have described; having obtained the honourable denomination of an *Unitarian Society*. For this implies all the rest. The opinions of single persons are often overlooked, or disregarded; but a *Christian church* is as *a city set on an hill, that cannot be hid*; and when they shall become numerous (and they are continually increasing) they cannot fail to attract universal attention. And this cannot but operate in the most favourable manner for the interest of Christianity in general. Indeed, it is sufficiently obvious at this day, that it cannot stand on any other ground.

I cannot conclude this Discourse, the last that I shall probably deliver from this pulpit, without expressing my satisfaction in your choice of my successor. It has been such as cannot fail to do you honour with the truly enlightened part of the community. I would not, and least of all in this place, flatter you, or him. But this I will say, that by making choice, as you have done, of a person to succeed me, who will  
conduct

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conduct your devotions, and carry on plans of instruction, public and private, as I am persuaded he will, on the same principles, and in all respects as much to the satisfaction of the judicious part of the audience, you have greatly lessened the pain that I shall feel from our separation. It will appear to me, as if I were still with you in his person.

May the connexion be long, and happy. Under his ministry, and that of his worthy colleague, may you be built up in the pure faith of the gospel, inspiring the genuine spirit, and discharging all the duties of it, that when the 'Great Shepherd shall appear, and take an account of his servants, you may be found of him without spot and blameless, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' And then, in the mean time, though absent from you, I may hear of your welfare, which, next to continuing with you, and promoting the same great cause myself, will make me most happy.

Having now closed my discourse to the proper congregation, I shall take the liberty  
to



to address a few words to the many strangers, who, as I expected, I perceive to be present.

Most of you, I presume, are come hither from an innocent curiosity to see and hear a person of whom you have heard much evil, and perhaps some good, and whom you do not expect to see or hear any more. Others, though I hope not many, may have come for some less innocent purpose: These, let them have come whenever they pleased, must have found themselves disappointed; and I hope agreeably so; as instead of finding any occasion of harm to me, they may have found some good to themselves. Nothing else can they have heard here; nothing but what is calculated to confirm the faith of all Christians, and to inculcate those sentiments of the heart, and that conduct in life, which are the proper fruits of that faith. All the doctrines that have been taught here, are those relating to the being, the attributes, and the providence of God; the divine missions of Moses, and the prophets, of Christ and the apostles, and that future state of righteous retribution,  
which

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which they preached. These great articles of faith you have heard not only asserted, but if you have attended frequently, repeatedly proved by rational arguments.

This a person disposed to cavil will allow ; but he may say that he has likewise heard many things heretical, and offensive to him. This is very possible : for every tenet contrary to that which any particular person has been used to consider as true, will, of course, be by him deemed false, and therefore heretical, and more or less offensive. But are we not at liberty in this country to think and judge for ourselves ? And as to every reasonable cause of offence, all doctrines are to be judged of by their moral tendency, agreeably to the rule of our Saviour, ‘ By their fruits ye shall know them.’

Now, what is the apparent moral tendency of the doctrines concerning God, and his moral government, that have been constantly taught in this place, but a life of obedience to his will ? And is this moral tendency lessened by the belief that this God is *one Being* ; or is it at all improved,

or strengthened, by the belief of there being *three persons in the Godhead*? On the contrary, is not the understanding confounded, and distracted, by the very attempt (which, after all, must be unavailing) to reconcile the doctrine of *three divine persons*, with the fundamental doctrine of the scriptures, that there is but *one God*. And by what conceivable operation can the temper and disposition of mind be improved by such confusion of ideas, and such embarrassment; to say nothing of the absurdity, and impiety, of the doctrine?

You have heard great stress laid upon the doctrine of the *divinity of Christ*. But besides that this is plainly setting up another God than the *one God* and Father of Jesus Christ; what is gained by it? Are the doctrines and precepts of the gospel of less force because the persons who taught them were not themselves gods? On this principle, the law of Moses would have no obligation; and every thing taught by the apostles, who certainly were not gods, must be disregarded; whereas, it is *the authority* by which doctrines are taught, and not the  
*persons,*

*persons*, or *instruments*, by whom they are taught, that is to be regarded; and this authority we all consider as properly divine.

Lastly, will the human character sustain any injury with respect to his love of *justice* and *equity*, in consequence of being taught that God, whom we are to resemble, is impartial in his regards to all his creatures of mankind, and shews no especial favour to any but for their superior virtue? Or will any man be less kind, or merciful, by believing God to be more so? When we make the Divine Being our pattern, and pray that he would ‘forgive us as we forgive others,’ shall we not be even more disposed to entertain proper sentiments towards our offending brother, when we are taught that if he only *repent* we must forgive him; rather than if we were to be led, in imitation of the supposed conduct of God, to demand some other atonement, or satisfaction, of him?

These, however, are the most offensive doctrines that have ever been heard from this place, or inculcated in any of my writings. Judge then yourselves of the

ground of the offence that has been taken.

As to the charge of *sedition*, nothing that can, by any construction, be supposed to have that tendency has ever been delivered from this pulpit; unless it be sedition to teach what the apostles taught before, viz. that we are ‘to obey God rather than man,’ and that in what relates to *religion*, and *conscience*, we disclaim all human authority, even that of king, lords, and commons. In these things we acknowledge only one father, even God, and one master, even Christ, the messenger, or ambassador, of God. If any doctrine be really false, being contrary to reason and the scriptures, it is not an act of parliament that can make it true. Or, if any action be morally wrong, as being contrary to natural justice and equity, it is not an act of parliament that can make it be right. But while we thus render ‘to God the things that are God’s,’ we render to ‘Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s.’ We are ‘subject to every’ civil ‘ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake,’ though not their ordinances relating to *religion*. And  
whether

whether we think any particular civil regulations to be wise, or not (and with respect to things of this nature, as well as others, different men will think differently) we submit to the decision of the majority, and are the friends of peace and good order.

Learn then not to give ear to mere calumny; but, according to the old English maxim, suppose every man to be innocent till he be proved to be guilty, and in all matters of *opinion*, allow to others the liberty that you take yourselves. As to *us*, I trust that we have learned of Christ to ‘bless them that curse us, and to pray for them that despitefully use, and persecute us.’ In the language of the liturgy we pray, that God would ‘forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and turn their hearts.’

Whether, then, you come as friends, or as enemies; whether we shall ever see one another’s faces again, or not; may God, whose Providence is over all, bless, preserve, and keep us. Above all, may we be preserved in the paths of virtue and piety, that we may have a happy meeting in that

38      *The Use of Christianity, &c.*

world, where error and prejudice will be no more; where all the ground of the party distinctions that subsist here will be taken away; where every misunderstanding will be cleared up, and the reign of truth and of virtue will be for ever established,

## APPENDIX.

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*To the Congregation of Protestant Dissenters  
at the Gravel Pit Meeting in Hackney.*

*Clapton, February 21, 1794.*

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

AFTER spending little more than two years with you, I find it expedient to leave you. But you will believe me when I assure you, that this resolution is not occasioned by any complaint that I have to make with respect to you. On the contrary, it was singularly generous in you to receive me when you did, driven, as I was, by violence from a favourite situation, and likely, from the prejudice of the times, to bring suspicion on any congregation that should make choice of me.

I have been happy to find that, though many, (as, on several accounts, was very natural) objected to the conduct of the majority, and left the society, some partially, and others altogether, your numbers are not on the whole diminished; and especially that, contrary to the expectations of most, I have found a sufficiently ample field of



usefulness in the classes of young persons who have attended my lectures. These I leave with peculiar regret, having had peculiar satisfaction in my attention to them, and in their improvement in religious knowledge, many of them, I doubt not, being well qualified to instruct others. I hope that, in your choice of a successor (in which I pray for your best direction) their interest will not be neglected; more substantial good, I am, from long experience, well persuaded, being done in this way, than in the best discharge of any other part of the ministerial duty.

Distant as is the country to which I find it expedient to remove, I shall always rejoice to hear of your welfare, both as men, and as a Christian society. But infinitely happier will it be if our conduct in life be such, as shall secure our meeting where *the wicked will cease from troubling*, where all the prejudices and misunderstandings that disturb the harmony of Christians here will vanish, and where we shall never be separated from one another any more.

I am, my Christian friends,

You affectionate pastor,

J. PRIESTLEY.

P. S. As the time of my departure is uncertain, though not far distant, I cannot fix any particular

particular time for the dissolution of our connexion; but I hope no great inconvenience will arise from this degree of uncertainty,

*The Answer of the Congregation.*

*Hackney, 16th March, 1794.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

WE have received with extreme concern the communication of your intention to resign your pastoral office in this congregation: a connexion, from which we had promised ourselves a great degree of benefit and happiness, and which our short experience has abundantly justified.

Whatever are the circumstances which have induced you to think of removing, it is some consolation to find, that it is not owing to any complaint to which we have given occasion; since you are pleased to bestow more praise upon our conduct, than is its due.

We shall always reflect, with the highest satisfaction and with real gratitude, on your public services among us; and on none more than your establishment of lectures to the different classes of young persons. Convinced, as we are, that the most important advantages are likely to be derived to the rising generation from this institution,

we

we shall be careful to keep this great point in view, in the choice of your successor.

In lamenting the separation which is about to take place between us, we feel particularly concerned, that your removal is to be to a country so distant, as wholly to cut off our personal intercourse with you: but we trust that Providence intends, by this event, to open to you a scene of greater usefulness; and it is this consideration, which better reconciles us to the great loss, which we ourselves are about to sustain.

Remote as may be the situation to which you find it expedient to remove, our hearts will go with you, and our affections embrace you; and nothing will afford us greater comfort, than to hear of your happiness and increasing means of doing good. If the attachment of those with whom you are about to live, is at all in proportion to the regret of those whom you are about to quit, you will have a sure pledge of future satisfaction.

We can take no merit to ourselves for having been ambitious to receive you into this society, at a time when persecution raged against you; since we consulted herein our duty and our best interests. But it gives us the deepest regret, that it was in this country that you should have suffered for the freedom of well-intentioned inquiries on subjects, respecting which every man is bound diligently to search

- 2 search for truth, and on which no man can assume  
a right to think for his neighbour. Without free  
1 discussion, truth cannot be ascertained, and it is  
the absence of free discussion which alone can per-  
petuate error.

Unable to deny the propriety of your retiring from a scene of things, where you can promise to yourself so little comfort, or perhaps even safety, we are at least bound to bear testimony to your irreproachable conduct, and to the patience with which you have borne your sufferings. At the same time, we must lament the stigma which our nation will have brought upon itself, both with Europe and with posterity, for having forced one of the first of men, of Christians, and of philosophers, to seek in foreign countries an asylum from the insults and injuries, which he had experienced in his own in the pursuit of religious truth.

In the pleasing hope of a happy and indissoluble union hereafter, to which time cannot put an end, we remain with every sentiment of gratitude and esteem in behalf of the congregation,

Rev. and Dear Sir,

Your respectful and sincere friends

and fellow Christians.

Signed by all the members of a committee deputed  
for this purpose by the congregation.

*The*

*The Address of the Young Men and Young Women, who attend the Lectures on the subject of Natural and Revealed Religion.*

TO THE REV. DR. PRIESTLEY.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

YOUR intention of quitting this country being now made known, accept the warmest sentiments of gratitude from those who, besides having benefited by your pastoral services, have also profited by your Lectures to young persons on the subject of religion. The merit of this institution, which is all your own, has its best evidence in the impression it has made on the minds of us your pupils. Through your means we not only feel confirmed in our faith in religion, but better disposed to the performance of our various duties; the knowledge of which you have thus rendered clearer to our judgment, and the practice of which you have enforced to us by new and animating motives. Exemplary in your own life, and firm under persecution, you have hereby superadded the  
strongest

strongest proof of the sincerity and the efficacy of your different precepts.

It is not permitted to us to deprecate a separation which is judged necessary for your comfort and safety, and which Providence has perhaps designed, in order to extend your usefulness; but we must at least lament, that our own happiness is no longer to remain so intimately connected with yours.

It is some consolation, however, that we can at least give you pleasure, by endeavouring to pursue your pious and wise instructions, and shewing that you have not laboured in vain to make us firm Christians and virtuous characters. Among other marks of our attachment, we shall hold it as a principal duty to promote at all times, in the congregations to which we belong, the institution of Lectures to young persons, of which we consider you as the founder, being firmly persuaded, from our own experience, of their religious and moral advantages.

Permit us to add our thanks for the present you have made to the library, of your valuable works, by the perusal of which, both ourselves, and those who follow us, must endeavour to mitigate the memory of the loss sustained, by the discontinuance of your personal instructions.

That

That your voyage may be safe and expeditious, and that, during the remainder of your life, you may enjoy an uninterrupted series of happiness, is the earnest wish, and ardent prayer, of

Reverend and dear Sir,

Your grateful and affectionate Pupils,

Signed by forty-one names.

*The Address of the Unitarian Society.*

TO the REV. DR. PRIESTLEY.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

YOUR friends, the members of the Unitarian Society, address you on the present interesting occasion, to express the regret with which they are penetrated, at your approaching departure from this country, and their warmest wishes for your happiness, in the place of your future destination.

So little as you have at any time interfered in national politics, it is but too obvious, that the outrageous violence which you have experienced, and the atrocious calumnies which have been circulated with such unexampled industry to injure your character, and to render your residence in your native country unpleasant, and even unsafe, are entirely owing to that manly spirit, with which you have avowed and defended, what you firmly believed to be the pure and rational doctrines of the gospel; and to that truly Christian zeal, with which you have entered your protest against those prevailing errors, by which the religion of Jesus has been corrupted, and debased.

But you, Sir, have instructed us, both by your doctrine



doctrine and example, to refer events to a higher cause : and while we regard with pity the conduct of men, who, under the cover of religious zeal, are gratifying their own perverse passions, we also view them as instruments, under the direction of a superior power, for the accomplishment of purposes, the most distant from their own intentions ; and we bow with humble acquiescence to the all-wise disposing will of Heaven. The history of the Christian church from its first origin, through the revolutions of successive ages, has taught us this lesson : that it is the order of Providence, that religious truth should be promulgated and confirmed by the sufferings of its most enlightened, and most zealous advocates. In this part of the world, you, Sir, have kindled a resplendent light, which no length of time, nor violence of opposition, will be able to extinguish ; and you have been honoured as the instrument of diffusing religious knowledge, beyond almost any individual in later ages : we anticipate therefore, with pleasing hope, the extensive success of your future labours in America. Favoured as we have been with your rising, and your meridian lustre, we ought not to envy our brethren on the western continent, the benefit of your evening ray.

Hitherto, Sir, you have been our pattern in every meritorious exertion in the investigation of  
religious

religious truth, in every thing open and courageous in the profession of it. And when you are removed to a distant region, we trust that you will occasionally hear, that your illustrious example has not been so long exhibited before us in vain. We shall think it our duty upon every proper occasion, and at all hazards, to avow our attachment to the genuine truths of the Christian religion; and if, in the discharge of this duty, we should be exposed even to severer persecutions than those which you have encountered, we hope that our conduct will not disgrace the honourable cause in which we may suffer.

We, Sir, rejoice with you, in the assurance of the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God, and of Christ, and of the universal dominion of truth and virtue, of order, liberty, and peace. And though we deplore the probable distresses of the intervening period, we are happy in the persuasion, that infinite wisdom will direct and controul the storm, and that all the intermediate calamities will be as an evanescent point, in comparison with that glorious and happy state of things, of which they are the necessary means, and to which they ultimately tend.

In the mean time, we shall regard it as our indispensable duty, to prepare ourselves and others for these interesting events; not only by the zea-

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lous propagation of what we judge to be important truth, by every fair and honourable method, but likewise by exemplifying in our whole conduct, the tendency of the principles of the Christian religion, when properly understood, to form the human mind to that strength and elevation of character, in which the true dignity of our nature consists; and by which we may most effectually put to shame the calumnies of malignity, the prejudices of ignorance, and the scoffs of infidelity.

That your voyage may be prosperous, that your future lot may be happy, beyond the most sanguine expectations of your warmest friends; and that your sphere of usefulness may be widely extended, and prolonged to the most distant period of human exertion, is the ardent wish, and fervent prayer, of

Reverend and dear Sir,

Your affectionate friends,

The Members of the Unitarian Society.

T. LINDSEY, Chairman.

*London, 18th March, 1794.*

*The*

*The Address of the United Congregations of  
Protestant Dissenters at Birmingham.*

*Birmingham, March 25th, 1794.*

DEAR SIR,

KNOWING the near approach of your departure from this country, we cannot but think we should be guilty of a culpable neglect, did we not previously bid you an affectionate farewell.

We have beheld with mingled indignation and regret, that spirit of persecution which kindled the flames of ninety-one, spreading through the realm its baneful influence, and pursuing into his retreat, the friend and ornament of his country.

A spirit which was thought, in this country at least, to be for ever extinct, inspiring its barbarous violence into a lawless mob, drove you from this place, and broke those bonds, which form the sacred connexion of a pastor with his flock.

Wanton in malice, the same spirit has continued to persecute you with private molestation, and with public calumny. The prostituted abilities of Mr. Burke have industriously seized each public occasion of exciting against you the public odium, while the dark assassinating spirit of anonymous abuse, has been busy in the public prints,

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and

and found means to assail and wound the tranquillity of your most private retirements.

From a country where you have met with injustice instead of reward, with calumny and persecution, instead of praise and esteem—we cannot wonder you should depart.

The hope, that in America you will find that asylum which is here denied you; the confidence, that a free country will receive a veteran son of liberty, with all the respect that is due to his worth; the belief that those who have fought and bled for their own rights, will reverence one who has been deprived of *his*; the certainty, that the implacable enemies of liberty will never permit you, in this country, to enjoy repose; and the strong suspicion, that they would gladly seize an opportunity, to aim not only at your personal freedom, but even at your life itself,—reconcile us to the prospect of your departure, by demonstrating its necessity.

Wherever you go, renown will attend you. In England alone are you calumniated. In every other land, each grateful science will crowd around, and offer a garland to him, whose genius has enlarged their sphere, or added to their stability. Liberty will warmly welcome you to any of her dominions. Virtue and Religion will hail,  
with

with joyful smiles, the arrival of their intrepid champion, their ardent votary.

We have, on a former melancholy occasion, expressed our sense of the services you rendered us—we expressed less than we felt, and we again send you our thanks.—While tyranny will rejoice; while bigotry and superstition will clap their hands at your departure—all that have been enlightened by your labours will give, in the tribute of a silent tear, more than those powers, with all their boasted influence, can bestow on their most favourite vassals.

Though *you* depart, your *labours* remain. The propagation of truth is silent, and slow, but it is irresistible. The seed that you have strewn around, will not lie buried in the earth for ever. It is arising, and it will arise, till it ripen into a glorious harvest.

To your talents, your integrity, and love of truth, we shall, while we live, bear testimony. We rejoice, that of these no enemy can deprive you. While it will afford consolation to you to reflect, that no virtuous effort you ever made can possibly be lost, it shall be some consolation to us, that we have enjoyed, that we do still enjoy, so many of their effects.

Though the waters of a wide sea will soon roll between us—your example, your precepts, your principles,

principles; shall not be absent. These shall continue present in our minds, and shall inspire our conduct.

May he who curbs the ocean, who stills the wild winds, and the tumultuous billows, grant you a prosperous passage, and safely land you on the shores of America.

Signed by the unanimous desire of a numerous meeting of subscribers, belonging to the two societies of Protestant Dissenters, assembling in the Union Chapel, Livery-street.

RADCLIFFE SCHOLEFIELD.  
JOHN EDWARDS.

THE END.







• A  
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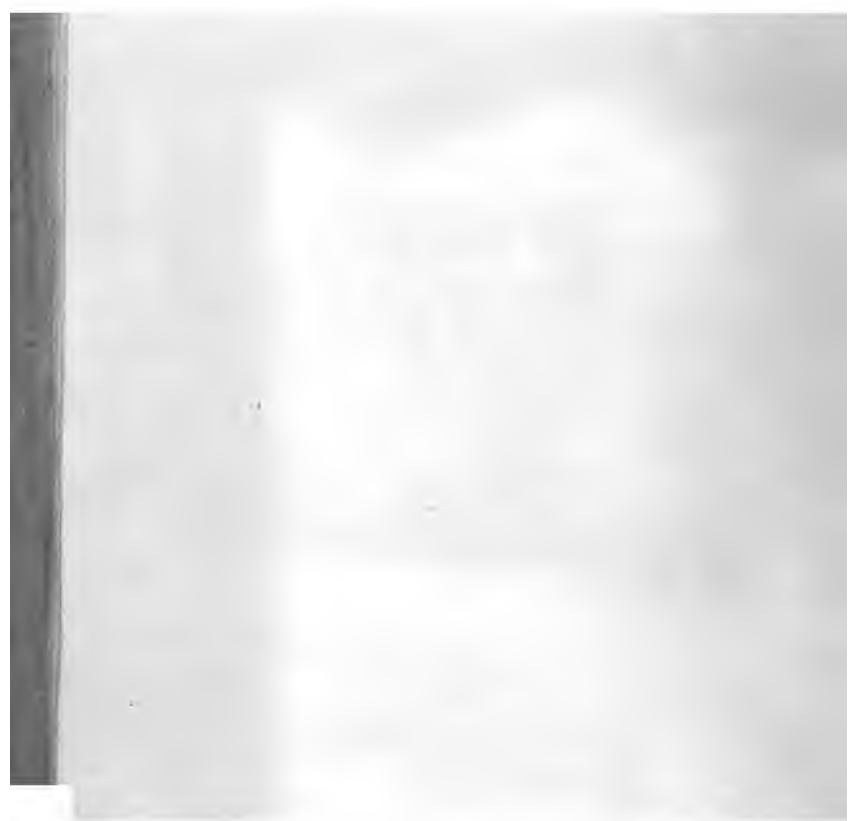
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